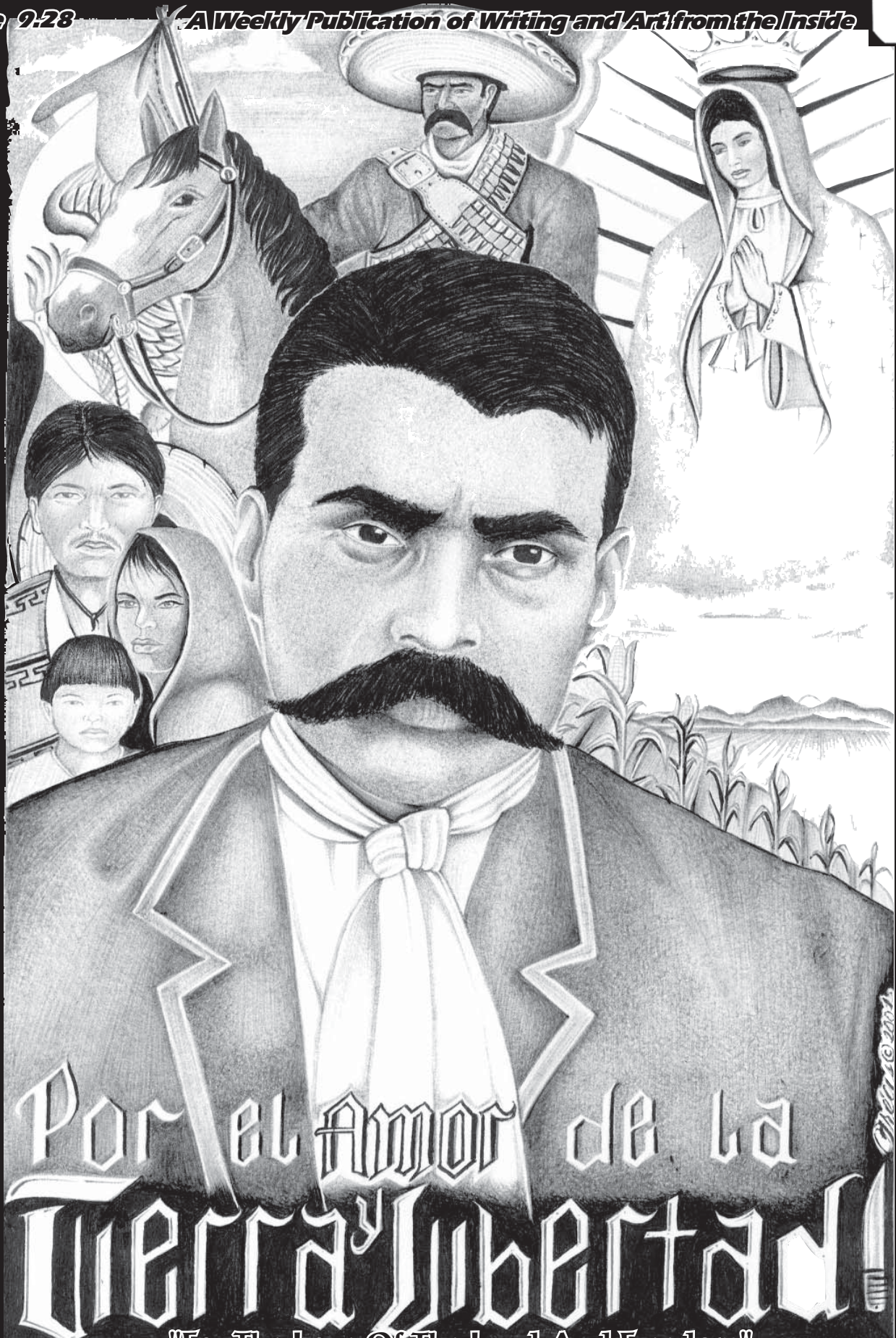


The Beat Within

Volume 9:28

A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside



"For The Love Of The Land And Freedom"

Sometimes it feels like it's been a long, long time since we last embraced you readers, but in truth, it's been mere days. We get so lost in the world of editing, writing and typing, meeting and greeting, going to the Hall, and into the community. During all this, a week's or day's work, we hear about those who are succeeding, folks on the fence and those comrades and associates who have passed too soon.

The Beat office is really a home base/support for so many. Here they can confess, create, and find themselves using the power of the pencil and the trust they have with The Beat facilitators. So with this said, our days truly blend into each other, and it sometimes seems like there are weeks and weeks between the publication of one issue (9.27) and the next (9.28) while other times it seems like just a few days.

As if you didn't know, the responsibility of our relationships, the typing and responding to pieces, and our embracing of young writers as colleagues and friends, be it in the Hall or in the office, yields priceless knowledge, because each person we meet and interact with is a gem, a gift, as far as we are concerned.

These important relationships bring us very close to the storms that rage within all of you. We know of the love you have of your loved ones. We know how many of you think about and try to figure out how to save yourselves from an early death or incarceration. We know that many of you play the fool and the soldier, and how many of you need and desire support and love. We know how many of you are wasting too much time and we know where that leads. We know how you have to endure pain and how you hope that these days of struggling will end. We know from you readers how much you want everything, from the material, to finding a person who understands. Well, we want to raise our glasses to those of you who trust us with your stories. We've been doing this for a long time and we must say we wouldn't want to be doing anything less than what we are doing today. Cheers/props to you for finding comfort in your voice, in your writing, and in your desire to improve and better your life or another's life, and for sharing yourselves with us at The Beat.

Right now we want to acknowledge a small component of our program, which we call The Beat Video Diaries. The Beat has been shooting video diaries for as long as the program has been around, but just recently, this last year, we have formalized the process, getting a grant to do these diaries. Well, we haven't had a point person to do this job for a minute, so we want to thank our good neighbors, YO/ Youth Outlook, for looking out and helping us edit some of the existing interviews so we can showcase our progress.

Well, if any of you have access to the Internet, you can see a sample of our video diaries when you connect to www.thebeatwithin.org.

The YO! video editing team has just recently put together a powerful 25 minute VHS tape of five minute stories from members of our very important Beat team, from Allan Martinez, Ming Toy Lee Davis, Jason Tréas, Janea Asis, and Omar Turcios. These powerful teachers, in a sense, bring The Beat to life when you see the person behind the story comfortably sharing their lives as they see it. Powerful!

This is something we know we will be doing a lot more of in the coming days, weeks, and months. Video is such a powerful tool. In truth, we started this part of The Beat program so the interviewee would have a video to hold onto, you know, a bookmark in their life. Now we have the ability to let a young person take this process even further if he or she wants to. We now have the resources to assist young people in getting into making video/film/DVD. We don't want to say anymore until we officially finalize a partnership with this great, up and coming community-based organization.

Another very cool/generous gift we recently received in the mail came from one of our BWO contributors, Sherman Manning, who delivers what appears to be a stellar/exceptional novel filled with his truths about the criminal justice system. We cannot say too much about this either, given that we have yet to read his book, but we will, we will! We have also received permission from the author, Sherman Manning, to rerun excerpts we like from his book in The BWO, so brace yourselves readers! By the way, the book's title is "Creating Monsters," published by HarperCollins in New York City. If you can't wait to get a hold of this book, we encourage you to visit www.cafeshop.com/creating for more information. This is also Sherman's eighth book! Eighth book?! Damn!

He wrote "Creating Monsters" from inside the California Department of Corrections. In his dedication pages he includes an excerpt from a letter President Nelson Mandela wrote his wife, Winnie, from a prison cell, when she too was incarcerated on false charges. Sherman asked that if we were to reprint anything from his book, that we first include this

letter. It reads:

"You find that the cell is an ideal place to learn to know yourself, to search realistically and regularly the processes of your own mind and feelings. In judging our progress as individuals, we tend to concentrate on external factors such as one's social position, influence and popularity, wealth and standard of education . . . But internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one's development as a human being: honesty, sincerity, simplicity, humility, purity, generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve your fellowmen — qualities within the reach of every soul — are the foundation of one's spiritual life. At least, if nothing else, the cell gives you the opportunity to look daily into your entire conduct to overcome the bad and develop whatever is good in you. Regular meditation, say of about fifteen minutes a day before you turn in, can be very fruitful in this regard. You may find it difficult at first to pinpoint the negative factors in your life, but the tenth attempt may reap rich rewards. Never forget that a saint is a sinner that keeps on trying."

All right, our POW winners for this healthy, near-100 page issue are two writers from Arizona, Kyle and Carlos; Shadow, Big Samoa, Sho-Moe from the 150 Crew; Friskie, Midnight, Taeda-Tae, Heath, Adric, Ben, Rocheleau and Pockets from San Mateo; and Jue from San Francisco's YGC.

Every week and in every county that has Beat workshops, we hand out the topic sheets and we discuss these the topics as a group, with the hope that folks write on the topic, or that we at least plant a seed for another topic. Our first topic was, "Hurts So Bad — What or who has hurt you the most? How did you deal with your pain, anger or sadness? Did you ever get over it or are you still hurting? Did being hurt cause you to be kinder and more understanding with people, or did it teach you to seek revenge?"

Who have you hurt? Did you cause someone pain on purpose? After you hurt someone, how did you feel about doing it? If you were sorry, did you apologize? Did you make things better with this person? Would you wound someone's feelings again if you could avoid it?

Tell The Beat Within a story about how you were hurt and what it has taught you. What advice do you have for other youth who've been hurt?"

Our second topic was, "Sympathy — Have you ever had sympathy for anyone? Are you ever able to feel someone else's pain or feel compassion for someone? Have you ever felt sorry for anyone? Ever felt pity towards someone? Your mom? Your dad? A family member? A friend? An enemy? Yourself at one point or another? A person you didn't even know? A person who writes in The Beat?"

If you've never felt compassion or sympathy for anyone, what do you think about sympathy? Why aren't you able to feel for someone else? Did you feel so much pain in your life that you are now desensitized (no longer able to feel pain)?"

Lastly, "What makes you smile?"

Before we wrap this note up, remember, our editorial note writing contest has been postponed a month, from July 31 to August 31, 2004. So if you are up to the task, you still have time to submit your essay! The contest question is, what is your all-time favorite movie and why? Do you like love stories, horror, crime and punishment, or musicals? What was it about that movie you loved so much? Was it actually the movie or the story that led up to or revolved around the movie? Top prize for this contest is a \$100 money order, followed by a \$50 money order for second, while third and fourth places will earn the writers \$25 each.

OK readers, let's end this note on a very upbeat note! We would like to dedicate, and officially welcome, Nancy D. to The Beat Within family. Nancy found out about The Beat via another program she is a part of in Hillcrest Juvenile Hall in San Mateo County. She was so moved by what the young people told her about The Beat and what she learned from reading through The Beat weekly, that she called us to thank us for our work, and to find out how she could get more involved, so we arranged a meeting. Well, the meeting was very successful, and at that meeting we gladly arranged for her to observe our program in Hillcrest, which we're sure she would like to be more a part of down the road. Besides the workshop observation, she now donates what she can each month (a very generous observation at that), thank you, and she volunteers her time once a week in the office to help with the typing, editing and responding. Thank you, Nancy D., we truly appreciate the love and support you have shown us. You're a beautiful person, thanks for everything, including your delicious homemade cookies. This issue goes out to you and your kindness.

All right readers, see you next week, thanks for reading this all over the map editorial note. This is how our work is, all over the map, but the good work gets done! Amen!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio and Donna Hunter

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Allan Martinez, Matt Melamed and Arlene Mitri.

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jason Treas, Allan Tinker, David Muhammad, Jill Wolfson, Patricia Johnson, Nancy DeMartini, Erica Lewis, Jason Tuufuli, Fanny Duong, Yvette Mannion, Arnisha McCall, Anthony Huston, Amelia Post, Shomoe-Iwe Pina, Vilasak Thebpanya, Amanda Ables, Mervyn Wool, Omar Turcious, Dennis Morton, Keir Davidson, Daniela Bible, Roy Hodgson, Yvette Coronado-Mercer, Will Roy, Eric Strenger, Devin Melvin.

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatly acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – Annie E. Casey Foundation, California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, Free Speech TV, Hewlett Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Louis R. Lurie Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund For Children & Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Richard Rhoda Goldman Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, S.H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, Shinnyoen Foundation, Stone Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Renbe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

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COUNSELOR'S CORNER

From The Beat: Ms. Wadud is the best! If more counselors were like Ms. Wadud the juvenile justice system would be so much, much better. There would be plenty of love, tough love too. Since 1996 we have had the opportunity to travel and visit many juvenile halls, and rarely do we come across a special counselor like Ms. Wadud. Hey we are sure they're out there, but we have yet to meet you. So drop us a line and tell us why you care about the young people you serve. We are listening!

To Ashley (Walden House)

Hi sweetie,

I got your message in last weeks Beat. I am so proud of you. Ms. Westbrook is too. I am so glad you stayed at your placement. Good girl.

Complete your program and get all of this mess behind you. I have faith in you I love you. I love you and miss you, keep up the good work and CALL ME!!

-Ms. Wadud, 150 Counselor

Now You Know Me

Hey, friend. How are you?
 Let me tell you something about me.
 Because of me, my sister is dead,
 All because I wanted to stay at the store instead.
 It is my fault my brother died,
 Because at the time I wasn't by his side.
 I killed my unborn daughter
 Just because I got taken from her mother.
 I came here and left my pregnant
 Girlfriend all alone.
 She got depressed and sick
 With no one to hold.
 I caused my love all this pain.
 My daughter in her stomach
 Started to feel the same.
 My daughter's little heart couldn't
 Stand all the pain.
 So it started to get slower day-by-day.
 Then all of a sudden her heart stopped,
 And all of this is my fault.
 One day at visiting I heard what was up.
 All this pain started me to cut.
 I was in my room, blood drippin' from my hand.
 Tears falling from my eyes.
 I started to repeat over and over, "Why? Why?
 Why did I let my daughter die?"
 I started to think about my girlfriend.
 This wouldn't have happened if I
 Didn't let go of her hand.
 Every night I think about what I did.
 I wonder if my girlfriend's heart will forgive.
 All because of this, I'm really insane.
 Now I take meds to take away the pain.
 All this is messing my head up.
 Can't think straight. Feeling soaked up with pain.
 This past year, it's like sitting in the rain.
 I can guarantee this feeling will never end.
 Never mind. Forget that. Do you still want to be my
 friend?
 I bet the answer is "No," and I can understand why.
 That's why I tell no one and keep it inside.
 I will always smile just to hide my sadness.
 But if you look in my eyes,
 You'll see I'm depressed.
 My life is full of misery.
 I can bet nobody knows
 What it feels like to be me.

-Kyle, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We envy the strength and courage you have for not only experiencing such a thing and surviving, but also for being able to channel those feelings through writing. We wish there were a better way for us to describe the extreme compassion we feel towards you, but mere words can't express the deep sympathy we have for you. However, we feel like you are being really hard on yourself, and we're worried about you. Sometimes things happen regardless of what we do, so nobody should take all the blame in any situation. Especially one of this magnitude. So if you can, please be less hard on yourself, live for the future, and keep your head up. Easier said than done . . .

**Walls have never made a
 decision for me,
 so it is in myself where
 I'm caged!**

Gangsta Cry

Who would ever think a gangsta would cry? A gangsta would shed tears for a little girl who got killed? .An official gang member with the official dots?

He never really cared about life until a little sweet angel was born into this world. Sandra Flor Sevier was his little girl name. Three years old, never traveled, only been to Mexico 'cause that's where she was born in Northern Meca.

Little Sandy never would hurt a fly 'cause she's not like that. She was my first born and I loved her. And if I was there I would've gave my life just to save hers 'cause she was my little angel with black curly hair.

I never thought I would see a gangsta cry until that gangsta was dead. But I was wrong. Look at me

-Midnight, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is one of the saddest pieces we've read in a very long time, Midnight, and it also made our eyes tear up. Some things just should not happen in this world, and you have our heart. We know you must be going through a whole lot of emotions and thoughts, and we hope that however you find a way to get through this terrible pain, you don't put yourself in a vice that will only hurt you more. One of the Founders of this country (Tom Paine) once wrote: "These are the times that try men's souls." He could have been writing about now.

Newborn

Slow steps into a world that I know so well
 Steps I have taken time and time again.
 'Bang' the heavy steel door slams shut assuring me,
 this is no dream.
 Eyes closed, I run my fingers the length of cold paint
 plastering thick cement walls.
 My eyes unfooled, but a mind determined for freedom
 steps through the mesh grill above a chalky and battled
 window determined to feel fresh air.
 The echoes of progressing ridicule,
 thunder rushing through halls and creeping
 under the door to my cage.
 Keys, ceiling fans, the rhythmic drip of a loose pipe,
 untouched anger passive to conceive any means of reality.
 No basis to interlude hate with the outside world.
 They are animals, and scuttle furiously
 from the conforming yet safe illusion of civilization.
 The rooms are full, residents of criminal background.
 Painfully, I dream of the world rushing forward
 with or without me.
 Ever growing, but now I am alone, the rooms are empty.
 I have found my peace.
 It is clear now!
 Why could I have not seen it sooner?
 I wanted to be free (didn't I?) I needed it.
 This foolishness heats my blood,
 pumping confusion through every inch of my newly born
 body. I do not want to leave this room!...
 I seek no such freedom from bars or walls.
 "Walls have never made a decision for me,"
 so it is in myself where I'm caged!
 I am standing outside of a rigid snow-covered window.
 Inside! If I could only get inside I might confront the pain,
 the confusion stirring deep within.
 I could hug myself and whisper in a soft but dedicated
 voice, "I'm sorry you never knew your father," or
 "Why does everyone you love seem to float away?"
 Mused, I squeeze myself. Concerned... True compassion.
 In a cold sweat I feel helpless,
 but grateful to have learned.
 If I want to be free I must first confide in myself,
 I must trust my mind...
 because no one else holds the key.

-Ben, San Mateo

From The Beat: Whoa! On a scale from one to ten, one being garbage and ten being absolutely astonishing, your piece was an eleven. We're not even trying to put it on too thick, you really have talent as a poet. Like all great poems, there are allusions to ideas or events here that we cannot fully understand, but which seduce us into wanting to know more, into wanting to read more, into wanting to feel more of the power of your mind through your words. Bring them on! Like we said, Whoa!

Her Love

What makes me smile?

The glow on her face, light from a shuttered window
casts mysterious illumination.

Her defined cheekbones, smokey eyes,
lips, moist and warm draw me close to her

She crawls towards me like a ferocious lion,
curves of her smooth skin bring knots to my stomach.

A building tension makes breathing a weary task,
sweat beads in lust-driven palms.

Loneliness is driven far from our fire.

Painful embers struggling, my past are cooled by her
watery touch

I cannot look into her eyes
or I will erupt in laughter

for I cannot remember a moment of greater happiness

Trust makes me strong.

Her strength is confident.

But her love... her love makes me smile

-Ben, San Mateo

From The Beat: We don't say this as often as we should, but we think you have the skills to publish your own book of poetry. Seriously. Never have we seen words so elegantly put together, and this piece is as good as any BWO piece we've published. The only difference is we sat there and watched you write this in like thirty minutes. Do you think the way you view the world is rare? We do, and because of that we hope you keep writing these amazing poems. You truly have a gift. No, this poem doesn't make us smile; it makes us suck in our breath in awe.

**Sweat beads in lust driven palms
Loneliness is driven far from
our fire**

Dark Nightmare

In the darkness I can see

Little children surrounding me

As their circle starts to shrink

I think my head is playing me

But it's not and child climbs on my bed

And whacks me in the head

I get up and run away

But I can't 'cause I'm here to stay

I taste the blood dripping from my dome

Man this wouldn't have happened if I were home

Now all the children make me fall

And start chaining me to a wall

I start to think this is cool

But one child calls me a fool

Then they start cutting me with razors

All over the place, and shock me with tasers

My whole body is covered in blood

I scream as loud as I could

But no one hears as they pour alcohol on me

It starts to burn; I start to scream

I wake up to staff at my door

And I was screaming on the floor

Staff tells me I had a nightmare

And shuts the door

Where my nightmare continues.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say our nightmares are usually about stuff we've been through but heightened. Once you get out of that place — maybe your nightmares will slow down and life will become more the way you want it to be. The first step is to break the chains of incarceration and find a new destination without hesitation before you cause yourself more devastation.

Just Another Statistic

How to become a statistic. Shhh it's easy. Don't believe me listen up. Facts state if you came from areas that are filled with low income housing, a liquor store on every corner, crooked cops, crackheads, and prostitutes, you are already a statistic in the eyes of the system. Why? Most prisoners are from these areas — actually it's the majority. Or you couldn't do this.

First, head over to a store and get you a flag (to all the squares it a bandanna) a color of yo' area of choice. Then start messing around with drugs slangin' or usin' — don't matter. After you accomplish that, start kickin' it wit' yo' patnas and establish yourself as a group of force or doin' bad shhh. Now you wit yo' patnas — y'all ready to get down.

Get yo' self some pistols and start planning to make some money. Ain't no backin' down now, you don't want to seem like no sucka, right? Pick out a liquor store — or if you down enough find the right bank. Go in quick — run high, gun high, LA style — get that money and... bounce.

Aight, so you did it. Now you rich and it's a week after you hit your lick. What's this? Them boys at yo' do'. They got you in that damn interrogation room saying they got yo' patnas on tape sayin' you set up the hit and you the leader and you forced them to do it.

Being as stupid as you is, you crack confessing that all the bullshhh is true. Except you don't realize that if they already had that information — they would've already arrested yo' dumbass and you would've been locked down already. But they tricked yo' dumbass, because they didn't have shhh on you but a hunch on you. But too late — you already in a locked down facility, being maximum-security waiting for CYA or in county getting ready for state pen. Now you're just like us... a statistic.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That piece was deep, almost like a dark comedy! You are becoming such a great writer! You had us hanging on each word! Was it unintentionally hilarious in some parts? Why do you think that most of the people that fill up jail cells come from the ghetto? Do you know anyone who grew up in the ghetto that made it out of there successfully? When you are released, do you plan on making some changes in your life so that you will no longer be a statistic? Good luck!

THE
BEAT
WITHIN

You're Hurting Me

You once said you loved me
You said I was your pride and joy
I was yo' baby girl
And you were my baby boy
But then you started leaving
Why did you have to be so deceiving?
And when my questions started to
arise
You still continued to feed me your
lies
And when your fist would strike me,
Everyone on the block could hear my
cries
You're hurting me
I knew you were cheating,
But I wasn't sure
If I was the only one that you were
beating
Why won't you let me go?
Why did I have to be the one that
you're needing?
You're hurting me
I'm still on the floor bleeding
You go me back on the drugs and
drank
I feel so helpless
I'm forced to give you all of my bank
Last night, or so it seems, you called
me
A "trick," a "slut," and "hoe"
But how many girls have you slept
with?
I don't even think you know
So how you gonna call me out my
name
How are you gonna lower my self-
esteem
And try to make me feel your shame
In this situation you are the one
Who is to blame
I'm contemplating on how to tell you
boy
This is not a game
How are you gonna even try to call me
a whore
When you just screwed some girl on
the door
And then you knocked me out
And now I'm bleeding on the floor
Can't you see you're hurting me?
Why do you guys have to play all
these games?
Why do you mess with all these
females?
Not even knowing their names?
Why do men insist on breaking so

many female's hearts?
Why do guys like to tear me apart?
Why do you have to stay?
Why won't you let me get the hell
away
You show no remorse
I can't live like this everyday
Can't you see you're hurting me?
Is there any man
Who understands me
And is willing to take a stand?
How are we going to come together
If we act as though we're from warring
lands?
These emotional scars
Will not fade away
I'm just trying to get through this
But you're hurting me in more than
one way
I hope that one day soon we part
Even though you've broken through
The barriers of my heart
Can't you see you're hurting me?
These feelings are too strong
I can't stand it anymore
This bullshhh has been happening
way too long
Every time I start to get up
You push me back down
And I don't know why
But I sort of miss your voice's sound
I thought true love was what I found
I'm starting to build my new
foundation
On solid ground
Why can't you see you're hurting me?
You say you love me and you say you
care,
But I can't fall for your words
Because you're not really there
Can't you see how you're hurting me?
Do you see the things that are
That shouldn't be?
Tell me why in my life, hurt and pain
exist?
I don't know either,
But I feel it each day with the touch
Of your fist
My love is a river
That's slowly drying up
You've taken your share
So for the last time, fill up your cup
'Cause from this moment on, I'm
through
I know it's not okay
For you to treat me like you do
You've disrespected me long enough

Now it's time for me to act tough
I'm not the same person
That you once knew
Because of the fact that I moved on
Makes me different from you
I'm sure that you'll never change your
ways
So go ahead
Smoke that purple haze
'Cause you made me stronger
For my coming days
You'll never know how you hurt me,
But I do hope that you're able to see
Some of the grief and pain you've
given me
All the pain that you have been dealt
Will never measure up to how I once
felt
Too many lies
Too many beatings
Too much cheating
Too much deceiving
But one day it will come back
And it will haunt you
And you'll remember my words
And they will taunt you
You're hurting me
I don't know what made me blind
And stopped me from being able to
see
How truly bad you were to me
Thank you for making me stronger
But I can't be with you
For one minute longer
So, in this letter
I wrote my goodbyes
And tried to describe to you
All of my cries
I'm no longer deceived
By your lies
So, why are you still hurting me?

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: Our first reaction to this is to wince in pain; you've been through so much that no one, especially a young girl, should have to experience. The relationship as addiction that you hint at here is a story that's vexing every time we read it — we feel that you want to break the addiction, but there's an undertow that keeps bringing you back, especially in the last line. But there's a second reaction, more powerful than the first, and that's a realization of the incredible strength you have. Not only have you survived, you're able to speak about your experience with power and eloquence. We're sure that others will find strength in your words, and that some men who treat their women as you've been treated will be shamed into looking at their own behavior. How will you continue to deal with the pain from this experience? How can you continue to repair yourself? What will it take to never fall into the same situation again?

**How are you gonna even try to call me a whore
When you just screwed some girl on the door**

Reflections

Reflections of myself
Reflections of my mind
No one really knows
Maybe you'll know with time
Reflections like these
Are extremely hard to find
Reflections of my heart
Shows how much pain
I have when we're apart
The reflection I see
When I look into my mirror
Is of a lost, little girl
Overcome with fear
Reflections, reflections
Which one to choose?
If I show my true emotions
I know I will lose
What face should I wear today?
If I get lost
Should I act
-as though I know my way?
So many reflections
People passing judgments
Why can't I show
Who I really am
Say I can't do something
And I'll try to prove that I can
People make assumptions
Which aren't always correct
I hide my life
Because I don't want them to know it
was full of neglect
Reflections, reflections

Which one should I choose?
Reflections, reflections
Which facade should I use?
My feelings and emotions
I choose not to show
But using these masks
I will never be able to grow
Life is full of choices
Whether they be right or wrong
I have not seen my true reflections
It's really been too long
My reflections are those
Of an abused girl
Who's just tryin' to find her place
But in the eyes of her mother
She's the family's disgrace
Her mother abandoned her family
And broke her father's heart
So this abused girl
Is uplifted now that they are apart
Her reflections are previews
Of what she is to become
She could be your best friend
Even though she gave herself to more
than one
Reflections of her mind
You have yet to see
You are among the few
Who I have allowed to get close to me
These are the reflections
Of words within my heart
Now I know
We must one day part
Reflections, reflections

Until my dying days
Reflections, reflections
Being pulled in so many ways
Do not judge me until you see
The reflections of my soul
Because until then
Who I truly am,
you will not really know
The privileged few
Are the only ones who understand
these words
The only ones who care
So, for those you love
You should always be there
Reflections of my eyes
Are the reflections of my soul
You should feel special
You are one of the few that know
My true reflections . . .

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: This piece points out that sometimes words provide a deeper reflection than a mirror is able to show, because the mirror only reflects the surface while these words go far deeper. Your ability to use the pencil to let your inside out hints at your knowledge of yourself — it seems as if no rocks were left unturned in this exploration. You say you can't show who you really are, and then you proceed to show yourself through your words. Why is it that you hide so much deep down, where only the pencil and paper can shed light? What will it take to share who you really are with more people? Is it possible that others can actually help you shed light on yourself, helping you to know yourself even better? What are the different ways in which you've been pulled? We look forward to your continued self-exploration in The Beat — use these pieces and the pages they appear upon as a different type of mirror.

Planning ahead and achieving your goals is how you stack that big money.

Karma

I'm mad as hell right now, 'cause I just found out that my momma just sold my car. That's messed up. They sold my stuff and didn't even ask me. They got my 2400 watt 15s, sittin' in the garage on the floor, and guess what? I can't do anything about it.

It's weak being in here. I got my girl on the outs, stressin'. Every time I talk to her, she starts cryin'. I miss her like hell. That's my wifey. People might say I'm sprung, but what we have is real. That's what is goin' to keep me out of this place. I can't be away from my girl for this long. It's hurtin'.

When you locked up, you're helpless and you ain't got no decision, or no say in nothing. That's why this stuff ain't cool. I'm a changed man. I'm tired of this crap. I ain't never comin' back here. I realized I don't belong here. I hear all these people up in here talkin' about they shootin' this and shootin' that, robbing people, and sellin' dope, carryin' straps, and doin' they thug-thang.

If you don't like it in here, y'all need to drop that stuff and realize that karma is real. Whatever the heck you do wrong, it's goin' to come back to you. That's

real, 'cause I ain't licked nobody since I was fifteen. I hit one lick two years later, and I got rapped for attempted murder and robbery. Karma hit me for doin' some stupid stuff. If I would have thought about what I was doin', I would have realized that this little, quick money ain't nothing.

If you want to succeed, you gotta work for your future, so you can make the big money later on in life. Planning ahead and achieving your goals is how you stack that big money. Stealin' ain't gone get you nowhere except jail, and carryin' straps ain't gon do nothing except get yo' behind shot, or 25-to-life.

If you put out a positive attitude, and let you're enemies know you ain't getting' down like that no more, they'll soon realize that this block beef stuff is stupid and ignorant. Be safe and think about your life and your future.

-Jue B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't feel your anger at your mom for selling your car because a car is just a car. But we truly feel every other word you wrote! This is such a thoughtful piece, such a dead-on serious piece, and such a mature piece, that we believe you have learned a powerful lesson. We have faith that you won't forget this lesson when you have the freedom to mess up. When the temptations arise, remember how you feel today, and just say no!

Still Opening My Eyes

Hey, what's crackin' Beat? I'm back once again, makin' my appearance in the pages of Tha Beat . . . but this time, it's a little different. I came back and reality finally hit me! I'm startin' to realize that I can't keep livin' like dis! If I'm not in jail, I'm on the run!

I've been here so many times, I done lost count, plus I can recognize a staff when they walk down the Hall by the way their keys be jinglin'! I'm sick of staff!! I'm tired of bein' locked up in this cell, same routine every damn day!

But this place has taught me things and I've become comfortable here. Staff gives a damn about me more than my real family ever has, and I believe that this is one of the reasons I am here today, 'cause didn't nobody ever give a damn about me when I was young, and till this day! All I ever had was the streets.

I remember back when I was six or seven years old, I was getting drunk, high, or both with my uncles who were, and still are, on the block. They couldn't look out for me when they were busy thuggin' it themselves! Yet, there was one person who took care of me, but he died on the block and for the block when I was only five (RIP). He was my Uncle Beto, but I called him "Tio Diablo" ('cause his nickname was Diablo). He died right in front of my young eyes by rival gang members. That's when my hate for the world began . . .

Everything seemed to be me against the world even with so-called "familia." Everything I've ever had, I got it myself. Ain't nobody ever gave me nada! Moms was too busy on her own hypes, and Pops was hustling, thuggin' it out, not givin' a damn 'bout none of his kids. Only time I really spoke to him was when I needed money or dope to sell, or when I was eleven and I needed his car. He never done did nothin' for me, so I didn't care if he was broke or starvin'. I just needed to get by.

When my uncle died, everything went downhill. I started drinkin' and smokin' when I was six. By the age of eight, I was gang-related — gangs were so easy for me to get into since most of my dad's brothers were ol' Gs and homies from the 'hood. I didn't have to get jumped in; I was automatically accepted. It became my refuge bein' around the homies and the 'hood. It still is. Basically, it has become home sweet home, yet this lifestyle has taken too many of my homies, (RIP) who were like family to me, but when they died I couldn't cry 'cause I've ran out of tears to drop. But when they died, to me it just meant retaliation. I was gonna get revenge no matter . . .

So I kept thuggin' it and I kept getting deeper and deeper in this lifestyle. I kept so much anger inside of me, and to this day, I still hold anger inside, and it's made me cold-hearted. Don't nobody else's feelings or whatnot matter to me! Tha way I think about it is, why should anybody else matter to me when ain't nobody ever gave a damn about me? Or why show love to anybody when ain't nobody showed me no love! Ain't nobody gon' take care of me but me! I can't let myself go hungry. I need clothes on my back . . . I mean, I can't sit back and let the world pass me by!

My cousin, Alyssa, tells me all the time to get out the 'hood, that it ain't doin' nothin' for me. She tells me to look around and see where my craziness has brought me . . . I see it, I really do, but it's complicated! It's hard to walk away from what has basically become my sanctuary, my safe haven, my place of refuge. Tha only place I've ever felt that I belong is the 'hood . . .

When I started to live with my mother again, I felt awkward, and out of place. My brothers, sisters, and even my mom look down on me! But, it's nothin'. I still rise. I

look back and I think if I regret anything I've done, and I realize that I don't 'cause everything that happens, happens for one reason or another. Yeah, I wish my uncle, who was like a dad to me, was still here to show me what I'm supposed to do next 'cuz God knows I'm lost! But I don't regret nothin' 'cause life is too short to be sittin' around regretting everything you do, but I know my uncle is in a better place watchin' over me 'cause I should've been dead long ago the way I've been livin' my life. So I know he's been protectin' me, even though a lot of bad things happened to me.

"In every action, there is a lesson learned," and it's taken a lot of grief and pain for me to sort of open my eyes 'cause I haven't fully opened them yet 'cause in so many ways I don't wanna change my lifestyle. I wanna go back to the block and slang dope, get drunk and high and just thug it, but my cousin Alyssa keeps telling me that one day she's gone take me out the 'hood, but I really hope one day I can find myself getting up out the 'hood on my own. But in reality, I just don't know when that'll be, so till this paper and pen meet again . . .

(R.I.P. Uncle Beto, 1962-1994. Truly missed. I miss you, Tio. I need your guidance. I wish you were still here wit me, but you still live in my heart.)

-Pockets, San Mateo

From The Beat: Wow — what a piece. We've known you for a long time, throughout your many visits and return visits, yet this is by far the best piece you've dropped on us. It's amazing that you've survived your childhood; as you note in the piece, it's somewhat amazing that you haven't been killed. But more than the physical dangers you've waded through, it's the emotional struggles that get to us — parents who aren't parents, the one person who looks out for you being killed at a young age, becoming gang affiliated so quickly. And yet you do rise — you can reflect on your own experience, you can see that there is another way even in your denial of knowing how you'll get up out of the 'hood. Though the ways and reasons you found your way to the 'hood and your familia are understandable, and though we also understand the belief that you should and can get up out of the 'hood on your own, it almost always takes support from someone to be able to leave it behind. Maybe you and Vanessa can help each other stay up and out of the 'hood. Don't wait — it would be tragic for your name to join your Uncle's on an RIP list. It doesn't have to.

All I Wanted Was A Father

If they only knew, all that I wanted was a father
To be in my life in a big way so I could have
Been raised to be a man, not a boy, a man.
I would have had a better understanding of
What it means to be a man.

If they only knew

If they only knew how I feel about
Why my father left my mom
To raise seven kids on her own
It's not fair for my mom.
But if they only knew how I
Felt about life itself.

I can't talk to my father
Because it would feel like a total
Waste of time to let my father know me.
He really don't want to know how I feel
Because if he did, I would not be asking myself
If they only knew
If they only knew why I bit my bottom lip so much
If they only knew the real me

-Carlos, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: If only they knew what not having a father puts a kid through. Would we do what we do if we had a positive male role model to look up to? Will you take care of your child when you have one? How has the experience of not having a father played into that decision? We hate to admit it, but a lot of men are slippin' by not taking care of their responsibilities. Hopefully you'll be different.

Sho-Moe's Pain

Why won't it stop?
 Let me live God — Whoever you may be...
 I am tired of this, God.
 Leave me the hell alone.
 Let me live in peace.
 Stop these dreams from haunting me.
 You let my brother rape me.
 My mom leave me
 my brothers leave me
 and my dad leave me
 and you took my grandma to heaven
 with you
 Who the hell gave you the power to
 ruin my life?
 I know it wasn't me.
 Why last night did you let my brother
 haunt me in my sleep?
 Why did you let him come and make
 me weep?
 I am going insane dealing with all the
 pain
 Just let me live
 I am tired of all the shhh
 As soon as I feel safe you break me
 down
 By making me relive my pain of
 getting hurt
 by my family
 in my own house
 my own bed
 I can still smell the Camel cigarettes
 I can still feel the wind on my back
 from the window
 I can still feel the pain
 I can still hear everything
 you're a cynical God
 you have no mercy
 You don't just have me remember this
 pain
 You set back the hands of time so I
 can relive the pain
 the pain that drives me insane
 that I live with dormant everyday
 But you always find a way to bring it
 back into my life
 to make sure to kill my light of better
 days
 But you have succeeded for now
 But it won't last long
 I am too strong

This pain is temporary
 And pride is forever
 So I will never bow down to a White
 God
 not now
 not in the future
 so take your torture somewhere else
 Because you can only slow me down
 You can't stop me
 I am made of WAPPO AND POMO
 BLOOD
 We do not break
 We do not bend
 We only defend my life
 With all the power bestowed upon me
 My life is not one of body
 Nor mind
 It is one of eternity
 I live in my soul
 Not in your body
 For I do not accept Christ nor you as
 my father
 I accept that you hold the card
 But I hold the soul
 And you messed up when you gave me
 free will
 Because I will fight with a passion so
 strong
 that you will think there is two of you
 and I will never give up
 so do as you feel in my life
 because no matter what I will have life
 you can take your body and mind
 But my soul will always be mine
 even if you bury me face down
 I will make sure you feel my wrath
 For I will not let you ruin my life
 anymore
 No mater what you try
 You can only make me cry tears of
 sorrow
 But they will dry like they always do
 It's nothing new
 You can test me if you want
 But it will get you nowhere
 Because I am already in my heaven
 when I want to be
 Because I live in me
 I don't live in your world of pain and
 suffering
 I live in my soul so you can only do so
 much

I am going to find a way to shut you
 out
 I think I have
 You can only make life so bad
 But I am use to hell
 I been there my whole life
 So you can TURN THE KNIFE IN MY
 HEART
 But I will NEVER FALL APART
 Not because of you.
 So like the battles before this one
 Leave me be
 Don't you realize God — you can't
 break me.
 Leave me be
 Not unless you want to fight the soul
 in me
 For you can't haunt me if I never sleep
 So now how will you creep?
 I figured out your game
 You can only drive me insane — if I
 give in
 But not me
 Not now
 I have gotten too far
 I have passed the bar set for me
 And I will continue to be
 So leave me the hell be.

I curse God only because you curse
 me

"I rather burn in hell with my red
 brothers than go to a white man's
 heaven."

LAME DEER SEEKER OF VISIONS

SHO-MOE the native of a new breed
 I have all my ancestors in me

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We give you many props for this epic poem here. You are hella strong and brave to put your life and soul in "our" pages of The Beat Within. We also want you to consider that maybe it isn't God that's putting you through all this — maybe it's the devil. The devil is throwing hell at you and testing your faith in God and right now the devil is winning. God may not be a white man and no one will ever know, but believe God is inside all humans. God is what you feel when you have that urge to help someone. God is the feeling you feel after you do something nice for someone else or the feeling that prompts you to do something nice for someone else. God is just the will to go on and we see God is the one helping you get through the pain right now. Powerful, powerful writing!

**You can only make me cry tears of sorrow
 But they will dry like they always do
 It's nothing new
 You can test me if you want
 But it will get you nowhere
 Because I am already in my heaven when I want to be**



Smile For Me

That's Just Taeda-Tae

(Part 2)

Shhh, Tae started at a very young age,
I wasn't into basketball, I was thinkin' 'bout getting' paid,
Posted on the blade,
and didn't come home till the next day,
Especially if it was bitten on the block man,
That's just Taeda-Tae.

Most of the ninjas I hung wit' was fraud.
I didn't know until they start talkin' to the law,
Tellin' 'em this and that,
Tae the one with the crack.
Run up in his area, he got guns, ammo and stacks.
That's when I had to act a fool.
Called my peoples to bring them tools.
But I ain't goin' to go there, it's cool.
But just like in school,
you get penalized, especially for breakin' rules.
That's just Taeda-Tae.

When I sit back, man this shhh is really funny.
Ninjas claim they gettin' it, but ain't got no type of money
Some game from me to you.
If you a hustla' then hustle but stack your loot.
You only live once so make sure you handle your biz.
Go to school, get a job, and raise some kids.
Just be easy and don't let nobody tell you, you can't do shhh.
Just stay focused and you'll be cool. You dig?
That's just Taeda-Tae

-Taeda-Tae, San Mateo

From The Beat: You're a master lyricist, and The Beat could tell you were feelin' it. You gave powerful messages like go to school, so you won't end up as just second best. But we have to wonder, do you take your own advice? Are you going to stay focused tonight? You've written wise words, and you did it with skills. Thank you for explaining how you feel. Thank you for making The Beat more real.

My Caring Father

Last time I got arrested for using drugs, I was sitting in the police station and my dad walked in. I was sitting in a chair, hands cuffed in front of me, and when he walked into the room he stared into my eyes for what seemed like an eternity. He didn't say a word, he didn't have to. I could feel his pain so greatly!

And then I stood up and he hugged me as hard as he could and I was cuffed so I couldn't hug him back. I felt so small and helpless that all I could do was cry on his shoulder in his warm, loving embrace. Later that day I got booked. They let me have a visit the next day and my step mom showed up without my dad. She said he was walking around the house with my chain on and it kept making him cry so she asked him to take it off, but he refused.

When she told me that the feelings from yesterday came back up and hurt so bad that I would have rather taken a thousand ass beatings than feel what I was feeling right then.

-Heath, San Mateo

From The Beat: Wow! We don't hear about many fathers being there for their kids. But your father is not only there for you, but he doesn't hide his emotions like most men would. We think that your father must be a great man to be able to show you all of that love. If you had a child, would you want to treat it the same way your father treats you? What was the hardest part about hearing that your father was crying for you? Hopefully more men will step up and raise their kids the best they can like your father. What an inspiring man...

Achieving My Goal

There are many people and different things that have hurt me over the years. It's hard to say what exactly has hurt me the most.

There are a few things that I can pinpoint that have hurt me a lot, though. Growing up, my parents have always argued and fought, and I just sat there and listened and watched. Afterwards, everyone would storm off and lock themselves up in their rooms. Things would cool off and I'd go and try to talk, or play, with one of them, and they would take all of their anger out on me, and I wouldn't know what to do. I just took it.

Years and years of this stuff just piled up until I started to not be able to take it anymore. I became a very angry kid since a young age. I turned into a bully and beat up kids for no reason. I started looking for fights and got good at fighting. Elementary through middle school, I never got any consequences bigger than suspension.

As soon as high school started, I started getting police contact and charges. I realized that I need to stop fighting, but drugs became my way out. I started smoking meth and robbing people. Now, I am an addict. I have over a year of being clean, and I'm trying to get my anger under control.

Hurting people makes me feel good for a while, but now, I just don't think it's cool to seriously hurt people for no reason. I'm planning on joining the Marines in August some time, to try and get my life in order, and get some discipline in my life.

I'm sick of being locked-up, and I want to travel and start a family. Hurting people isn't going to get my anywhere, especially if I start a family. It's time to be a man and get a fresh start. What I did is done, but I've still got a life to live and I'm ready.

Some advice to my peers: Just set a goal for yourself and go for it. Don't let people or things get in your way. If you fall, get up and keep going, and keep your head up.

-Adric, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is such a fine piece of writing, Adric — insightful, digging under the surface, upbeat and hopeful. We're pained to read of what you endured as a child, and how it made you into an angry, rebellious teen. But you bring such understanding to your situation, that we feel confident that you will be able to overcome the crippling effects that brought you here. We're not saying it will be easy, or that you won't have momentary lapses into past patterns, but the bright eagerness you bring to creating a "fresh start" is inspirational. You've recognized that by hurting others, you've hurt yourself, and now it's time to help yourself. We think you're going to do it — and, in like manner, by helping yourself you'll be helping others!

**I felt so small
and helpless
that all I could
do was cry on
his shoulder in
his warm, loving
embrace.**

Hurt So Bad

I have been hurt! (I am not in denial) many people have hurt me and brought me down.

When I was young my aunty adopted me the day I was born. I came up calling her mom. Her daughter always said not to call her mom 'cause she wasn't my mom. Those was what they put in my head. The more they told me the more I wanted my mom which made my aunty jealous. My aunty hurt me real bad because I know she used to love me so much.

Then when I got eleven, I started to live with my mom. She really loves me. She also loves crack! Sometimes she can't choose between the two. But when she chooses the other. She seems to love me even more. Over protected.

My mom really loves me. She beat me once 'cause I was outside with my aunts and uncles at night. She stayed out all day all night and came home the next morning or evening. She let me stay and take care of my lil' brother and sister. She only did 'cause she wanted me to be responsible when I grow up.

She said and done many hurtful things to me. Only 'cause she loved me. She finally abandoned me again, yeah 'cause she loved me. And from there I seem to only get hurt all over again.

But, here I am, I am fine, outgoing, respectful, sweet, and drug free. Out all of my hurt and pain my mother seem to hurt me the worse. But I know her biggest problem. So God has blessed me to be drug-free. So now, I know I would never have to choose between the two.

-Damia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! Damia, you've really become a mature young woman. You have got it together. Your mom loves you, unfortunately drugs make us do things to without thinking, which leads us to hurt the ones we love. There is nothing better than a lesson, to come out of a bad experience. Good for you, drug-free!



Life Behind Bars Isn't What You Expect In Life

The pain and suffering, realizing where your life went wrong. At night, when staff puts you down and locks the door, you're just sitting on the metal frame bed and one thin mat, suffering, and wishing you were at home sleeping in your bed not having to suffer by getting controlled by other people.

Detention is made for some people; meaning, I see many juveniles or conversate with them, and what they tell me is that "I don't care" about anyone, so I see that they don't care about themselves or the community and others, but you yourself fall in that situation or position. Meaning that you yourself have to wake up and realize the things you are doing are wrong and the drugs are not only hurting yourself, but your mother or father.

I realize that I'm thankful for my mother. She forgives me for the times I made her worry or hurt in any way. I thank her for coming to visit me while I'm detained. Also, she tells me that she'll help me in any way she can to guide me in getting my life straight. Now I really thought about how to change my life and choices I made in order to head on the right path and take responsibility with my own hands. Meaning, it's really up to me if I want to change.

Every morning I wake up, all I feel is hurt and disappointed in myself, because it hurts me really bad to see my mother crying every time she comes to see me at visiting. All I want to do is get my life straight and shape up and get my life straight so that I can put a smile on my mother's face after all the bad things I done put her through. I never want to see my mother's tears because I'm sitting here wasting my life in detention.

-Lil' Ray, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We really feel the love you have for your mother in this piece. Hopefully she feels what we felt while reading it. We were proud of you for putting your mother on the map. Our experience with people who are incarcerated is that they talk about how much they love and miss their family. However, when they get out, it's still all about the homies and the females. Are you different? How do you know? We hope you are different because mothers also need love. And we wish we could make everything better, but we can't. So we'll leave you with this: Never forget who was there for you when you were incarcerated when you get out. Many of us do . . .

**The only thing I do
is sit in my room and
wonder how I can
take back what they
took from me**

When Did They Take My Dignity?

Was it when they took me away from my home, brought me to this place away from everyone I love? Or maybe it was when they stripped me of my clothes and my personal belongings, forcing me to wear someone else's blue shirt, khaki pants, and black and white shoes, making me the same as the other 300 prisoners here. Maybe it was when they locked me in a 10 by 12 room, disregarding my yells and shouts as though we were speaking a different language, the language of caged animals.

I really couldn't say. The only thing I do is sit in my room and wonder how I can take back what they took from me. What it would be like if I could go to their home, handcuff them in front of everyone they know, and bring them here, lock them in a room!

Subject them to having their rooms, bodies and personal belongs searched like privacy wasn't an issue! Then I would see how they could do it to me so easily.

-Dominick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow Dominick, you really break it down in a horrifying way. Nobody wants to be treated like that. Do you think that this treatment is necessary when coming to the Hall? How can you get back your dignity? Can you? Is it possible, while you're in the Hall? Why do you think young offenders are treated this way? Is there anything good about this harsh treatment? Anything positive? What do you think?

Change Is Hard

Change is hard, because you really don't want to — but you know it would be best if you did!

The thing that kills me the most, is when I'm in jail. If you're like me, you tell yourself every day that when you get out, you're gonna change. But always when you really do get out, you resort to the same thing you've been doin' before you got locked up — and you end up right back in the same position, taking about the same "change"!

That's why change is a strong word. But this time when I get out, I really am going to change my life. Because I'm eighteen, and if I mess up again — I'm going to the pen! And that's the last place I'm going, on the real!

So, the only thing I can tell you — change! And try to help somebody else change, 'cause it will make you feel good about yourself when you do the right thing the right way. Thank you for listening.

-Young June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You need to join an NA or AA meeting. Call their hotline, and ask if there's a "young people's meeting" nearby. Or just go to any local meeting and listen to the OGs. You could look for an MA (Marijuana Anonymous) group, but they're rarer. They say marijuana is the hardest drug to quit because it's the most subtle in its addiction. You might not even know you're addicted till you try to quit! Get help though, because you need a clear mind to make those hard changes you write about; and it doesn't seem like you can quit smoking on your own.

No Disrespect

This goes out to everybody who gang bangs, whether it's red and blue, norte and sureño, or turf banging. The shhh don't make sense.

Why choose a color and be held to wearing that one color? Why kill people over "sets" (projects) you don't even own?

Most people are not proud to have to live in projects. They want a better life for their kids. So why claim something that's not a good thing? Why kill someone just because they don't live on the same street as you? It makes no sense; I don't understand it.

Most of the kids in our generation don't even know what they are fighting for, they just do it for the hell of it. They think it's cool to carry guns and yell their set any chance they get. But you can't tell them they are doing wrong — they gots to keep it gangsta and hold down their block.

If you ask me, it ain't worth dying over. But I'm just one person. No disrespect to the ninjas out there doing they thang. Be safe. One love.

-Tru B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Did you always feel this way, Tru? How are you able to see the insanity of killing — or being killed — for something as arbitrary as a color or a block or set where you happen to live? We don't understand it any more than you do, and we never get a satisfactory explanation. We have to believe it is related to the need for people to have some power over something in their lives. Too many people, especially young people, find they have no power given to them, so they create a world in which they do have power. We may be very wrong about this, but we're still waiting to have someone explain to us what the "cause" so many young people so willingly give up their freedom and lives for is all about.

What Hurts

Doing my time in here hurts the most. I've been locked up since May 27th for an escape from the Ranch, a burglary, and breaking some guy's jaw. I was out for a month and 1/2 before I got caught. I was caught breaking into a school, hoping to score laptops. What happened was the silent alarm went off and the cops came and I had to run. They were chasing and looking for me between 3-7 in the morning. I was hiding in yards, but eventually I got caught and I never got the laptops.

As for the broken jaw I was drinking and some guy was talking shhh and I just got mad and started swinging, and I guess when he fell, I started stepping on his head and I left. So when I got caught for the burglary I found out I was also charged for breaking this guy's jaw — he called the cops on me.

I've been locked up six different times and I know it hurts my mom the most. When I was younger, when moms was in the shower, I'd go through her purse to get her money, even though times were hard and we couldn't even pay the rent. I just cared about the money; I wasn't thinking.

The point is I've been hurting my mom for a long time. I'm 16 and since I was eight I've been putting her through it.

When I was really young I knew I was a "bad" kid that needed a good ass kicking, but I think she loved me too much to do anything about it. At times I thought she didn't care, 'cause I was thinking if she cared she would give me an ass kicking to teach me from right and from wrong.

I stole her car once, stole her money, hardly went to school, I was expelled, I fought a lot — eventually it caught up to me, a year ago I came to the Hall. You know at first I was hurt, but now I'm kinda used to it, I don't feel the hurt.

There isn't much more I need to say.

-Lalo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You deliver a brutally honest piece here Lalo. Do you think that you'll ever stop making your mother suffer? How can you let her know that you're sorry and you love her? Do you see yourself making up for the past with your mom? Can you get a job, and save up money to pay her back? If she doesn't discipline you — how do you discipline yourself? How can you make it so that you'll never come back to the Hall? And what about your temper? You need to work on keeping your hands off folks. Your life is going in a frightening direction, you need to find a different route. We encourage you to seek help before it's too late. Talk to us, talk to those you trust.

Waste of Time

Time has been wasted since day one.

Time has been wasted since I blazed my first blunt.

Time been wasted when I was handling my buzz.

Time been wasted when I was partying with my friends.

Time was wasted when I skipped school.

Time was wasted when I broke the rules.

Time was wasted when I wrote this line.

Time was wasted when I held my first 9 . . .

Time was wasted when I stole my first car.

Time was wasted when I did nights behind bars.

Time was wasted when I was on the block.

Time was wasted when I was running from the cops.

Time was wasted when I felt like I couldn't be stopped.

Time was wasted till I took time to see.

Time was wasted when I thought poetry wasn't for me.

-Ghost, Virginia

From The Beat: These refrains are almost hypnotic in the way they carry us along through an inventory of judgments. You convey a matter-of-factness that strikes the reader as emphatic and powerfully felt. One question: Why would you assert that "Time was wasted when I wrote this line"?

Why kill someone just because they don't live on the same street as you? It makes no sense; I don't understand it.

She's Too Young

She's too young to be having a baby. She thinks that her mom doesn't know, but her stomach is getting big. Her baby dad can't help her, because he's in the pen. Her mom told her to use her head, but she kept giving it out with nowhere to go because her mom kicked her out.

She saw sex as a way of leaving hell. With more than one mouth to feed, she felt hopeless. So without anywhere to go, she had the baby in a dope house. This goes on every day in the 'hood.

Someone needs to help these teen moms out.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It is a tribute to your heart that you recognize the tragedy in this story and, instead of laughing, you feel pain. Yes, someone does need to help these teen moms out (and the teen dads, and the teens that are not moms or dads). How many other young women do you think have taken this path out of hell — only to find that life with a child is just that much harder? We haven't seen much of this side of you in a lot of your writing, Lil' Dakota, but it is a side we like and admire. We only wish we had some wisdom to spit on how to solve the situation.

In The Projects, We Were Spat Out

In the 'hood time waits for no man
 You either get you mind quake
 or you live to learn from your mistakes
 It's all-out warfare in the 'hood
 We are the guerrillas who run our blocks
 Guns for protection for those maggots
 tryna send us under in a shady direction
 while we steady tryna elevate to a higher direction
 of love and affection
 Only God knows who will rise
 and who will fall in the hand of time
 livin' the lives of thugs
 In the projects, we were spat out
 Most crack babies with dope fiend in their mouths
 instead of being served with a silver spoon
 Blind to this world
 like an animal trapped in its cage
 strugglin' in the rage
 before me and all my real soldier reach they doom
 and time no longer resumes
 They wonder how it is to kill
 They label us suspects
 when we are the victims
 livin' our lives
 with these shady mentals

-Young Sochie B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If we have any quarrel with this fine piece, YS, it is that reliance on guns for protection. We have seen the terrible destruction, the permanent pain that this reliance has caused, so we can't agree that guns provide the kind of protection that recognizing how much we all have in common, as human beings, does. Yes, you are the victims, but far too often, your victimization leads to new victims, and on and on it goes. How can this life-and-death struggle you describe lead to a better life, a better way, not just for you and your homies, but for all of us?

*Only the
 Strong Survive*

Feeling Sympathy

A time when I felt sympathy for someone was when I saw a movie called "Full Metal Jacket," and it was based on the war in Vietnam. I was feeling sorry for the innocent Vietnamese families because of the way they were treated, because of being a certain race.

One part I remembered was when they found an innocent civilian hiding under a bunk, and they made him come out. The guy was retarded, and they made him jump up and down. Then, they hit him with the back of the rifle, and his mom was crying in Vietnamese, telling the soldiers to not hit him because he was innocent. That made me feel bad because that could have been me getting hit and my mom crying. I hate to see my mom cry.

-Jay Dah B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Recognizing yourself in the face of another (especially if the "other" is a different race, or nationality, or sex) — and feeling their pain as if it was yours — is a sign of your humanity. Can you transfer this feeling of empathy (more than sympathy) to those you might describe as enemies or rivals? Can you feel their pain too?

**Now it's up to me,
 I must choose
 right, unless I
 want to lose**

Running For My Life

Tell me where can I go?
 Where can I turn to the systems escape
 My world's in ashes, and here comes the monsoon
 to blow my life away. Seasons before, my elders
 told me of this violent wind
 And now sea waves are over the coast,
 and drown most of my friends
 I escaped once, count now,
 it's twice that I'm caught in its draft
 I'm fortunate still,
 'cause it pounds on me like my morning bath
 I've seen a chance, so I'm going to take it,
 like I'm in the desert
 and walked by a water fountain
 And now I'm walking and I'm sweating near the
 peak of the mountain
 After I'm there, I've got many paths,
 so which do I choose?
 Now it's up to me, I must choose right,
 unless I want to lose

G-Man B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a terrific piece of writing, G-Man! You have expressed both the hope and the danger, and you have seen just how much rests on your shoulders. That insight positions you very well for a positive future. How did you find your way to this level of mature thinking? What advice can you give other youngsters who haven't yet realized just how much power — and responsibility — they have in their own hands?

If I Could Change The Way The System Works I Would . . .

I would change the way society views today's generation. Facts about today's youth is we are looking deeper into the rap and hip-hop and gangster life, but should that be a reason to incarcerate us like caged animals? Just because we do certain things that are sometimes outrageous, yes, that is at times the truth, we are still human beings, and as soon as we get in the system, we lose our rights. Should that be a reason to slam doors in our faces, verbally and emotionally abuse us, or have us in our rooms tremendous hours at a time? Do they realize that we are already incarcerated that it sometimes causes us to act smart, sarcastic or obnoxious at times, which they use against us and hardly ever help to resolve it.

We should be able to have more than two hours a day out of our rooms. Why do they act so paranoid like we are going to start hella conditions? I'll tell you why, because they already have us stereotyped. Put yourself in my shoes, you think I appreciate not being able to write in my room because we might do something crazy, or do you think I appreciate people telling me "Why didn't you think about God when you were on the run"? How do you know that? Do you know me? Do you really know what I felt to feel like running, or do you automatically think I'm out selling or doing drugs, robbing and killing people, hanging with the wrong crowd?

Do you take time for me? No, you don't, you give me time. The judge, PO, and police officers, are y'all perfect, or are some people just born knowing good communication skills?

Only God can judge my life. Sure, I put myself in all or most of the situations I'm in, but hey, I guess I cannot expect PO's to do what I request. Sure, y'all know some of my life because of my files, but probation officers or judges, do you want to know my side of the story? Do you think it'll change anything? I don't, I guess y'all caused me to lose hope, because who has the authority? You do, and you make it known by going against my wishes. By placing me away from my family. You put me on probation and rehabilitation.

So tell me something, was the president sent to rehab for experimenting with drugs? But you sent me to rehab when I told you that is not where I belong. Most people, of course, would see that as denial. But is that the reason to send me with complete strangers with problems of their own, but then when we are in the outs, you tell us to stay away from the wrong crowd? That should not be a reason for y'all to rule my life in every single way possible, to the point where I have to deal with living in unsanitary conditions that make me lose my dignity. If I had a choice, I would pick the right people (in my opinion, of course) for the job. What I mean by that is people that care. Us young people really, really do need that.

But then again, these people are making a living, and of course, I keep that in mind, that someone is appointed to me. But they make me feel as if I'm appointed to them. All I want is for something deeper than these broke-down institutions. If they are getting paid for their job, there should be no half-stepping, they should look into all the options before they make up their minds about something that can change our lives.

But sometimes they tell us that we are trying to be grown, but with all the places they send us to sometimes they even force us to try to act above our age. For example, if we are running away and stuff like that, they take that as: "They are tryin' to run their own life; they are probably breaking the law; it is dangerous; we are not old enough" and stuff like that. But in jail and rehab and places of that sort, if we joke around and have fun, we are being immature and tell us of things that are, in my opinion, way past our maturity level. Not that I am immature, but when I think about it, we should be living normal lives, such as being home with our families or loved ones, going to school, doing things that teenagers do, and enjoying life.

God did not put me in this world to be locked up, but on

the contrary. I am not trying to judge the government or any person working for the law or anything, but some things we would benefit from if they changed.

Can it get better than this? Personally, these are things that bother me: when people lie in my face or try to beat around the bush and things seem all tutti fruity, when in actuality, they are in a way trying to not hurt my feelings, which shows how much they really don't know me. I don't like surprises or to be kept in suspense in any type of way imaginable. Or when it is time for my court date, there is no new information, things I could have told them a long time ago.

Well, I would like to say that I'm a smart young lady and think very logically, above my age. But I'm only getting on the points that I would change, because there are some positive things about the system, too, but unfortunately, whether people believe me or not, it is probably unintentionally or intentionally made for us to fail. The way I know and can prove this is because they always are prepared to give you the higher level of discipline whether you did something minor or major. They are already equipped, knowing ahead of time, with any of the slightest mistakes, where you will go next. Yes, it is us that does the crime again, regardless of the consequences, which society takes to the extremes at times. They put you on the strictest of the strictest each and every time, knowing what comes next, still getting paid, and that is how we are set up.

They are not ignorant though. They are not about to let you go with any kind of situation. They won't let you slide by once on probation, and that is why the Miranda rights absolutely go with everything, it is true: "Everything and anything will be used against you." They take every single thing into consideration and catalog it (which I view as stereotyping and putting us into groups) and tell us psychologically what is wrong with us. I don't even think they know what is normal anymore. Treat me as an individual. I demand my respect. I won't tolerate any type of speak up, because I'm my own perfect advocate.

Anyway, making a long story short, here are some things I think should change. I hope you agree. I'm trying to be as reasonable as possible, so here I will state my very own opinion on the law.

Schools and education: 1) Cheap individual learning plans, but not necessarily mandatory for individual education, because some people learn differently, such as visually — they have to see through pictures. Then there are people that learn better verbally, and some can work alone or through groups, and then there are the mentally challenged. There are also the people that find school too boring or they live in poor neighborhoods and end up dropping out for jobs or illegal activities. But then again, this is also putting us into groups when we really should be getting the individual and undivided attention we deserve.

How this intertwines wit' the law is when we end up dropping out, we will usually take the easy way out and do illegal activities and end up going to jail, juvenile institutions, etc. But what I would do to improve this is to find out what is going on at home and see what kind of environment they're in. It obviously, in my opinion, has to be something that is beneficial for that person or persons, and whoever is the one helping, because it all comes down to money in the end, that something has to be interesting. There has to be a way to gather the youth in a resourceful and useful way to improve on the community.

-Gata GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Man, Gata, we are so impressed with this piece. You really put a ton of thought and effort into thinking about this issue and writing about it. One thing that is so interesting about writing is that it can help you clarify your thinking. One issue you seem to struggle with is how the system, a big bureaucracy, can address people's individual needs. The other is how much responsibility for what happens to the individual is the result of the individual's actions (crimes, running, drugs, etc.), and how much is the fault of the system. The third is what should be mandatory and what should be voluntary. These are difficult issues to resolve. In your case, what do you think the system could do to help you build a better life, and what do you think you could do better in order to help the system help you? What would an effective plan be for you? One thing we know for sure is that you should keep thinking and writing.

The Ghetto Life Of A Prince

I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on August 14, 1987. I lived there until I was two years old, and then moved to New York for five years. I then moved to East Palo Alto, and have been living there ever since.

At the age of eight, I got locked up for two weeks for assault and battery, but wasn't placed on probation because of my age. I got out and stayed out for three years. I went back in when I was eleven for a gang assault. I did eleven months and got out shortly after my 12th birthday.

I went back a few times for probation violations, but committed another crime two years later. It was just petty theft, so I got out 24 hours later. A week later, I found out that my ex-girl was pregnant with my son. I stayed out to help her with her pregnancy, but I was still bangin'. When she was four months pregnant, we were in Sac with my cousin, and we both witnessed him getting killed, (gang-related). He died in my arms and that's when I got out the gang.

I still live where there's violence, but not my son. He lives with his mother in Santa Clara because I can't have him grow up the way that I did. He's now two years old and I'm almost 17. I'm always there for him and his mother, even though we're not together. I also have a little girl on the way by a different girl. This girl is my sister's best friend, so I've known her for a long time.

My sister was, and still is in the gang. I try hard to get her out of the gangs, but she won't listen. I don't want to lose her like I lost my cousin. My sister is my twin. That's why we're so close.

I'm now doing time for something that I didn't do. I don't want to get into all that right now because that's the next chapter.

(To be continued...)

-Prince Charming, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a very well-written and informative piece, and makes us eager to read part 2. The description of your cousin's death is frightening. If it caused you to give up banging, at least he didn't die in vain. But there's another issue that's more personal: how you can take care of two babies when you can't take care of yourself (at least, not from inside these four walls)? Bringing children into the world — being a parent — is the most important and difficult task anyone can be called on to do. How can you "be there" for either of your children when you are locked up here? When you get out, we hope you'll take precautions against getting your girl(s) pregnant (not to mention protecting yourself and them from STDs). As for your sister, it's up to her to want to change.

Loved Ones Lost

A time that I had sympathy for someone was when my cousin's mom died — who was my aunt and that is a pain that people don't get over. I had a lot of sympathy for her 'cause I felt her pain 'cause just as that was her mom — she was my aunt.

Even tho' you can't compare the difference you still feel the same pain after being around someone your whole life and then for you to just lose them like — man it really hurts your heart. Someone that took care of you all your life and you seen on a everyday basis — man, that really hurts. That is a pain that a lot of people can relate to 'cause everyone has lost someone close from a friend to a family member and it really hurts. And if that person is a loved one lost to you — it is also a love one lost to someone else.

But that person might have been closer to you than the next person so they have sympathy for you knowing that person was very close to you.

-Shannon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's real. A loss is a loss regardless of anything and you cannot compare pain. A man could get robbed/jumped and a woman could get raped and have the same feelings of losing something — manhood or womanhood. Also, each person's coping strategies are different so we all experience different depths of pain. Ya feel us? Have you ever comforted your cousin when she mourned the loss of her mom/your aunt? Have the two of you ever talked about her? Stay strong.

First Day Out

'Bout to be free, I can feel it comin'
Out the front door, you know I'll be runnin'.
Hop in the car, light up my first cig.
Bounce to McDonald's, eatin' like a pig.
Early in the mornin', that good Egg McMuffin
Ten of those things in my face I'll be stuffin'.
Then it's off to the house, back to my crib.
See my kid sisters, damn I bet they gettin' big.
Chill for a bit, then for lunchtime's sake
I'm off to Friday's, get a big steak.
And you best believe I gotta get some new clothes
Sicker than sick, from my head to my toes.
After that I'm seein' what's up with the homies,
The ones that keep it real while I'm gone,
forget the ones that are phony.
Go back home and chill. Can't do too much in
one day.
Relaxin', guy on the couch, playin' a video game.
Then late night just take it all in
Peace out, my last poem in the Beat Within.

-Rocheleau, San Mateo

From The Beat: You'll really be missed. We had a good time reading your lyrics. You've got skills, so don't let anybody tell you otherwise. Enjoy your freedom, and when you hit Mickey D's enjoy them fries. We hope to never see you again unless it's out here at the office of The Beat Within (and we'd love to see you there). What else are you planning to do? Are you going to get a job, or are you going back to school? Whatever it is, remember to do it moving so you'll never be stuck. Congratulations on making it to freedom, we wish you the best of luck.

Stuck In A Cell

Stuck in a cell
Contemplating heaven and hell
Wondering if I'll prevail
When all else fails.
Time's moving like a snail
In the place that I dwell
This life of incarceration
Feeling more frustration than motivation
I'm an inmate to the world
Convicted of being born
Imprisoned for life with no chance of parole
Walking inside the abyss
For my so called criminal habits
Gonna do a year for something stupid
But I gotta say it
The judge keeps giving me years
Putting my mother in tears
And the reason I don't change still isn't clear
But I'm stuck in a cell
Contemplating heaven and hell
Wondering if I'll prevail
When all else fails.

-Vamps, San Mateo

From The Beat: We have no words to describe how wonderful that piece was. So all we'll do in this response is babble on about how good of a poet you are. Naw, just playing! You are a wonderful poet, but who would The Beat be if we didn't ask questions? How can we help you make the reason you don't change more clear? Why is frustration outweighing motivation in your world? Besides getting out, what needs to change so that you can feel like you'll prevail?

**Walking inside the abyss
For my so called criminal habits**

Sympathy

I had a girlfriend two years ago who was in love with me. She loved me so much she would do anything for me. She basically would die for me. I felt and showed the love I felt for her, but it wasn't full blown love.

I remember her telling me that she would die for me. At that time I didn't know what to tell her. She has done so much for me. She has run away from home to be with me because her older brother and parents had her on lock.

As for me, I was always hurting her. The littlest things were turning into big things. I remember a day when she skipped school and took a BART train just to come pick me up after school. She wanted to surprise me. School was over and the bell rang. She came walking on campus looking for me because I haven't shown up in the front. She found me on a bench alone with another woman and we were all up on each other. My girl came out the cuts and started screamin', saying, "Who the hell is that? Screw you! Why do you always keep cheating on me? Why do you always hurt me?"

I felt really bad. I was just standing there watching her cry. She just kept crying and crying. I felt so bad. I had so much sympathy for her. I hurt her so bad. It made me want to cry too. I couldn't say sorry or explain anything to her because I got caught red-handed and there was nothing to explain.

That day made me feel sympathy for her and all the women that is being hurt out there. I will never cheat anymore. I wish I could turn back the hands of time, but it's hard for me to say I'm sorry.

-Rich, San Mateo

From The Beat: You say you have trouble saying you're sorry, but it seems like you did just that in this piece. It takes a real man to admit feeling bad about hurting a girl like you did — there's no pride to be found in treating someone else badly, which you found out the hard way. How will you remember that feeling the next time you're tempted to cheat? If you're feeling too tempted, do you think you'd be able to take the hard step of breaking up with a girl in a way that doesn't hurt her too badly? This story, in its simplicity and universality, cuts to the heart. Right on for stepping up and admitting to something of which you're not proud and for which you wish you could make amends.

Can You?

Can you open my heart 'cause it's getting so cold?
I've lost too many patnas but I'm leave that story untold.

But as a story unfolds and I'm stuck to tell this one
— it's how I live by the gun and die by it.

Can you help me choose a new life
and learn how to think twice?

Livin' life strugglin' to get by in my time of need
I had a wide open invitation to makin'
a livin' in the streets.

Can't you understand it ain't nothin' like the fast life
But everything that glitter ain't gold,
I turned selfish as I turned old.

'Cause everything you hear or see on TV ain't real
And that's how I feel

I lost my soul and lost control of my life
Can you help me?

Can you picture yo' self on yo' knees screamin'
"blasphemy" readin' scriptures beggin' for a new life to
see a new way to see things
when death is the only option
What choice do you have?

Can you mesmerize that?

Where you had to sell dope for the clothes on yo' back
But when you see me —

I smile and you see my gold teeth
And you assume everything is gravy, can you?

Think about a grimy life

Nothin' to live for

Just money and my daughter.

-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well if your daughter ain't enough for you to strive for the better — then we think the road you have in front of you will have many dead ends. Can your child motivate you to mold her life into a better one than yours? Do you want to make it so that she doesn't have to go through what you went through?

**I asked my God, why?
And if he can heal my
pain or hear my silent cry**

A Million Reasons Why

My momma turned me in to the police

I was angry from hurt

I felt like I wanted to burst

I asked my God, why?

And if He can heal my pain or hear my silent cry

It felt like candle wax on my heart that has already began to
start to melt.

I couldn't understand

Why?

Was it because the evil flame in my eye?

Was it the reason because of a family relative of mine had to
die?

It could have been a million reasons why

But it hurt me the most

To know that my momma would do a thing that made me
roast

In my cell thinking about all the things I've done wrong

If I could of brought back the past

Every last bit of it would have had to last

With happily ever laughs

It's not because I don't want to follow

It's because I'm a leader of sorrow

I finally understood the reason

Too many worries that were bad

Too many thoughts that were sad

And whatever it took for my momma to be happy or glad

She didn't want to see me in the streets

Sufferin' from the eyes bagged

And lips cracked

Lookin' like I've been beaten by the devils

But she rather see me locked up where I'm safe

Than all of that

She repeatedly sounded heartbroken and sad

So I thank her for that

-Ewok, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ewok, you really touched us with this piece. Your mom must really love you. You are a good son to acknowledge that. What now? It hurts to be in the Hall, especially when it's someone you love that turned you in. But remember, your charges are yours. She isn't responsible for your behavior. But, she is trying to be responsible for your future. She is trying to help you. It must have been really hard for her to turn you in. You know the right thing to do. Take your time, think about your life. Think about what kind of changes you want/need to make. We support you. And so does your mamma. Make yourself proud.

The Pain From Incarceration

Being incarcerated has caused me emotional and physical pain.

The emotional pain comes from not knowing what is going to happen to me, and asking for a second chance but I haven't received it yet.

The physical pain comes from all the hatred I'm around in this institution, and the ignorance of some people.

I deal with my problems by praying and asking for forgiveness for the sins I've committed. However, no one is perfect, so I do let my anger get to me sometimes and lose control of my actions.

I think I'll get over this whole ordeal once it's done, however I will never forget what I went through in here.

My hurting has actually caused me to be kinder to people because I want them to be kind to me, but sometimes people take my kindness for a weakness.

I have hurt a lot of people in my life, but what hurts the most is when you hurt the people you love the most, like my family. I'm hurting them right now by being locked up.

Sometimes I'm so mad that I'll cause someone pain on purpose, but when I realize what I've done I usually apologize for it, usually my conscience kicks in and makes me feel real bad. If I could avoid hurting someone's feels I wouldn't do it. For people who are hurting start praying!

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your writing is getting so much better! You make valid statements and then you back them up with examples from your life. You deliver a powerful on topic piece here Abbas. A couple questions, who are you asking for a second chance? And if you were the judge/God would you give yourself a second chance? Can you tell us readers more of what you go through in the hall? Can you paint that picture? What gets you angry? We also think that by smothering one with kindness is a great gift, it may backfire on occasion, but in truth it will help you in the long run. Thinking good thoughts. Also, tell us readers more about the importance of prayer.

Down The Road

As I'm riding down the road
Thinking about what life has to hold...
Only reason I live is for my son,

Bavron.

All of a sudden my ears is attracted to this loud siren
I see red and blue lights

as I look through my rear view mirror

Come to find out it was the Federal Bureau (FBI)

He said, "sir please get out of the car with your hands up."

I thought in my head, what else can happen?

My life is already messed up

As he opened the door, slammed me, buffed me, cuff me

Now doing 25 to life and my cellmate

just sexually abused me

I ask the board, "what are my offenses?"

They said, "oh, you don't remember? You were drunk and high and ran an old lady over some fences."

I dropped my mouth and my eyes got big

They said, "not only did you kill her you killed her kids!"

I said, "this not true, it wasn't me, this ain't right!"

They said, "you were the only Black man driving

with blood on your head lights."

I said, "Did you match the blood on my headlights?"

They said, "there's nothing you can do,

you're still getting 25 to life!"

I went to my room and thought about the night before,
Then my memory kick in, did I kill an old lady and drive off
with the pedal to the floor?

-Hampton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Drinking and smoking while driving is deadly combination. Too many lives have been taken by selfish individuals who indulge in partying, then get in a car, which then the car turns into the deadly weapon. What a brutal story you write. Think Hampton; maybe your story will save a life from ever drinking and driving again. We hope so.

I realized that after I get out that I am the only person who can control my life and get it back on track because no one will do it for me.

Realizations

What's up The? Well I been here for three weeks and I don't ever want to come back to Juvenile Hall. I have leaned in the Hall that this isn't a place for me or anyone.

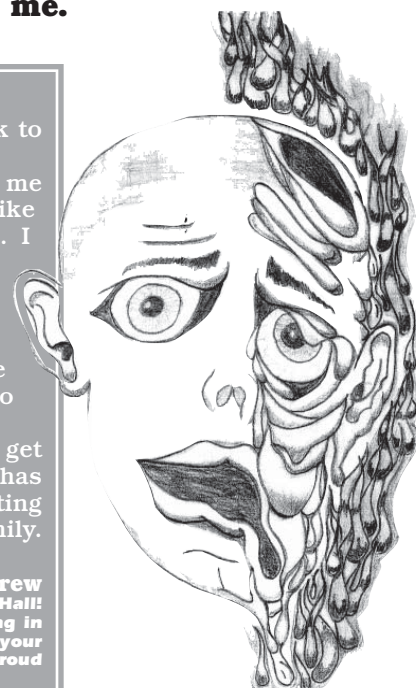
I also learned that my time in here has been a good experience because it teaches me not to make stupid mistakes in my life. It teaches me what I took for granted in life, like to eat anything I want or to just even walk in a park which I can't do anything in here. I learned how much my family loves me to visit me every time. I am very thankful for my family because other people in here don't even get a single visit and I feel sorry for them.

The Hall made me get into school and its good for me because I'm learning things. I will be very happy to get out and start my life over and not to get in trouble after this experience. The staff in here also gave me a lot of knowledge about how to stay out of here and how to avoid bad judgments.

I realized that after I get out that I am the only person who can control my life and get it back on track because no one will do it for me. So my experience in Juvenile Hall has helped me out a lot because if I didn't come here I would be messing up more and getting into more trouble and be out doing dumb things not realizing that I'm hurting my family. Now I realized everything in my life is not to come back to here or any prison.

-Rifa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If being in Juvenile Hall has made you this wise we would send every teen to Juvenile Hall! Now, why do you think this experience worked for you? What do you think other people get from being in Juvenile Hall? When you are released, what do you plan on doing with your life? How can you show your parents how much you truly do appreciate all they have done for you? How can you make your family proud instead of sad?



I Keep Hurting

it hurts me when
 i hear that one
 in my family is gone
 from earth to heaven
 i was hurt when
 i hurt my grandmother
 physically and mentally
 i am hurt to see myself
 in here and i know
 i can do better
 i am hurt because
 i humiliated my family
 i am hurt because
 i am not eatin' shrimp
 steak and crab
 i am hurt because
 my momma taught me
 better than what
 i am doing now
 i am hurt because
 i am not there
 for my lil' brother
 like i'm supposed
 to be helping him
 even though he's
 succeeding on his own
 i am hurt because
 my lil' brother is
 doing better than me
 i'm hurt when
 my family is hurting
 i'm hurting because
 this is not me
 i'm hurting because
 i want to go back
 to my mom but
 then again i don't
 i'm hurting because
 i keep coming back
 i need to relax
 i'm hurting because
 my loved ones are gone
 i'm hurt because
 i keep hurting myself

-Trenell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! This poem tells it like it is, and it shows the strength of someone ready to turn her life around and succeed. You don't need to do better than your brother, but you need to do right. That's the only thing you need to keep in sight. Do the next right thing, and then the next — and we guarantee you won't hurt your family or yourself.

**i am hurt
 because
 i am not eatin'
 shrimp
 steak and crab**

That's What's Dangerous Is...

It's dangerous when you have a person who doesn't care about himself or others. When you have a person who doesn't care about himself, how would you expect him to care about others? First, a person has to care for himself, before he can care for others. When a person doesn't care, he can just go all out at any time and doesn't give a damn about nobody. That's why you got people who would just start shooting into the crowd when they get mad, because they just don't care. If they get away, it cool, but if not, hey, it's nothing. That 's when they ain't missing nothing out on the streets, so going down is just a thing that happened.

I thought that I did not care when I was out, but now it seems all that is affected by me being down, it changed my mind and how I feel about life. So, yeah, that's dangerous when you have someone who doesn't care about the life of anyone. This shhh ain't helping. That's dangerous.

Being down, I don't think it's helping me one bit. On the real, I think I'm getting into hella shhh all the time. When I first got locked up in here, I did not ever get into as much stuff as I get in right now. It be petty things, too, but that's neither here nor there. It ain't helping me by being locked up. It's just making me madder, sittin' up in here, not even knowing what's happenin' with this time. Locking people up ain't the answer.

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've written a very interesting essay. It's scary the way you explain that those who don't care could actually shoot into a crowd without feeling bad. You may be right, that your being incarcerated may be making you feel more down, more depressed, how can you turn that around? You also may be right that locking people up isn't the answer. But after people hurt and murder people, what would be your solution?

IT'S Your Future

Can't Never Cry

People say it cleans your soul to cry. If that is true, my soul is closed up and dirty. I was always told as a child, men don't cry. And when my grandmother died she said, "don't cry dear, be strong." So I held the tears from my face to be the strength that my family needs, even if right now it is very little, I give it all.

But even though I hold these tears, my soul cries rivers for me deep inside, where no one can see, and only I feel! This is the price of the warriors mask, an internal pain and frustration, an internal anguish.

But for my family and especially my grandma, I will do whatever it takes to keep us together. Right now it is hard because I myself am weak. Yet I strive to become strong, emotionally, mentally, physically, strong for my family. I will try to assume a small part of my grandmother's role in the family to be the rock and foundation that holds us together. But these pressures and responsibilities are heavy on my shoulders, though I was hand picked to carry the yoke. So I will do whatever it takes, no matter what sacrifices I must make, because that's the way my grandmother would do it.

So I make the sacrifice of not being able to cry but to suffer the pain of the warrior's mask behind which my soul cries tears no one will ever see. Only I will know as I hold these feelings, like my grandmother did. So for now my soul cries rivers, that I wish my eyes could cry. But I cannot do it at all.

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Although you have been asked by family you love to not cry, we must say it is OK to cry. To deny someone of their emotions and feelings is wrong. You must feel a ton of pressure with the loss of your beloved grandmother, and to bottle up the sadness you feel. You are very fortunate to be able to express yourself on paper. In your next piece tell us about your life as a youngster. What was it like for you growing up? Where did you grow up? What kind of child were you? How did you get caught up in the system?

Compassionate Near Death

In my eyes sympathy leaves me so empty
 Blood boiling steaming hot like sorrow
 And pain with no pity.
 Is it just me?

Or does anyone else feel this way,
 So compassionate near death,
 Days that I feel, I'm with my last breath.
 No need for me to shed tears, no more,
 As if I had a heart anymore,
 There is no heart but a scar,
 A scared man's story already told,
 More lies and less tears to cry,
 My life may never end but I am near.
 Compassionate near death.

-Lil' Jepeabo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! This is a powerful piece! Compassionate near death? Is that to mean that compassion has drained life out of your heart? What is it that causes someone to feel this way? Is there any kind of rehabilitation for the heart? A lot of us have felt sorrow, compassion and pain to the point where we can't cry anymore. Don't worry, there is always a brighter day.

**This is the worst time of my
 life, it seems as though it is
 never going to end**

Show Me

Some me some happiness and guidance
 'Cause my path looks real dark and shady.
 Pain and misery comes and leaves
 And I'm stuck in this punk ass room all alone.
 Ninjas plot to get back to the spot
 Where it's rollin' of coke pills, weed and hop.
 Show me somethin' I ain't seen.
 Show me a dollar from America that ain't green.
 Show me it don't make greed.
 Strugglin' teens see things that come once in a life time
 That came from a dream and snatch
 Get wrapped up and need mama to be with them.
 Show me a clean day where people get a legal paper chase
 A new time phase no bullets that graze,
 Go ahead show me a new place like I read in a book
 Where cops ain't crooked and judges give a what
 'Cause right now it ain't nothin' out here to show for
 Just my scraper wit' the doors
 And my 45 under the floor of my seat
 Show you what?
 My gold teeth
 My tattoos
 My physique
 Me and my patnas sell dope to eat.
 Show me a new life 'cause there was no silver spoon in my life
 Shhh we had plastic
 I wanna live lavish
 No pain and hurtin'
 No more strugglin' and wishin' — so show me.

-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No one said life was going to be easy. You've got to strive to get on top. No ones gonna 'show you' anything — you've got to go out and get it and work hard to keep it. Nothing in this life is free and if it is — it sure ain't good. Nothing worth having comes easy. If you lose each time you play the game then obviously you have to play a new game.

Lifetime

This is the worst time of my life, it seems as though it is never going to end. I sit around wondering why, or how it could happen to me. But asking myself all these questions just makes me hurt more.

I wonder what life would be like if that night never happened, if I didn't take that drink or if I didn't even go out. Would I be at work right now? Or would I be at the movies with my girl, or maybe getting high with the boys.

What if... That is all I have left is to ask myself what if, why did I have to make that choice. These decisions we make will last us a lifetime, whether we are serving two weeks, or two years, it will last us a lifetime. And some of us don't understand, we take about five seconds to make a decision, but it will be with us forever, a lifetime.

So all I can do at this point is cope with my situation, and make the best of it. I will move on, my life will get better, because the choices I make now, will last me a lifetime!

-D-Frank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, D-Frank, sometimes we go through these things in life, which we cannot explain. We believe everything happens for a reason. Your life will get better. You are a stronger person because of your experiences. We suggest to just be patient and spend your time doing something productive, something positive!

Bad Situation

I grew up in the slum, dirt poor
 Every night going to sleep
 Thinking, what am I living for?
 Didn't want to take no more
 Of the rain and pain
 Thinking of my situation
 got me going insane
 Who is to blame?
 My father for leaving?
 My mother for not grieving?
 Why am I proceeding?
 Should I just stop breathing?
 I don't know. It's like every time
 I try to do right I'm interrupted
 Something in my head,
 Maybe my brain is corrupted
 I ask myself, how can I leave something
 I've been in my whole life?
 I can, but it's going to take
 all my might
 to fight
 this temptation
 Damn, I'm in a bad situation

-Jeremy, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Every great mind struggles with itself. A great mind is one that has debates with itself, so don't think it's abnormal to have your brain tell you two different things. Do you think your upbringing played a role in where you are today? If you do, that means that some of what you did wasn't only one you. And if that's the case, wouldn't succeeding after being raised the way you were be more satisfying than living the fast life? Just a thought . . .

**There was no silver spoon in my life
 Shhh we had plastic**

She Makes Me Smile

I am dedicating this to my loved one. I love her with all my heart and I'm writing this to tell her how much I care. I hope I will get one more chance to be with her. It hurts so bad when I cannot see her. I dream about her. I want nothing bad to happen to her. I would do anything for her.

It's all good. I'm not tripping. I just hope that she finds the right man for her. And if he doesn't take responsibility and treat her right, I hope she'll take her hands and spread love all over me. Sometimes, thinking about her in my cell makes me cry. I think about her and I hurt so bad. I need to stop all that crying and turn into a man. I am a man, but I'm a sad man, sometimes.

-Ricky, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Ricky, this is your best piece yet. You are becoming a man. And all men are sad, sometimes. It's the price we pay for being alive. We have to be open to what comes our way, and sometimes that's sadness. But not always.

Learn

Do you like school?

Alternatively,

do you see your friends and act cool?

We all should like learning, because in life, that gets you your earnings.

School is a good place to be — not on the streets making people bleed.

If there is something you want to know, then school is where you should go.

If you use drugs, you become dumb.

They make you forget where you're from.

School is a helpful tool.

If you don't go there, you're a fool.

You can't pretend to be smart,

so start learning for an earning.

-Christine, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Write on Christine. You've been holding out on us. This is a fine poem. And you're right — you can't pretend to be smart. Thanks for the poem. We look forward to more, especially now that the cat's out of the bag. Good work.

Sad And Hurt

The day that I was real sad and hurt was when God decided to take my brother. That day I was feeling like I was going to die. He was one of the best brothers that I ever had. He was keeping me away from drugs and gangs.

But the day he died I started to use more drugs and got into gangs. Now I realize that my brother didn't die. He is still with me. Not in person, but as an angel. I thank my brother for taking care of me. RIP brother.

-J, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: His spirit will do what it can, but he needs you to do the physical part. Are you ready? You know what he wants for you. Do you know what you want for yourself? If not, it's time to figure it out.

Life

My uncle took a shot to the brain
Zombied out, still smokin' cocaine

Crack rock got him goin' insane
In and out of jail, his life is a shame

Life is a cold, cold game

How it switched up

Pops duce caught slugs

from a ninja who showed him love

Money will make your best friend
put yo' face in the mud

Like 2Pac, I'm livin' the life of a thug

Beware of them ninjas wit' mugs

Off a Thiz, I'm showin' no love

-Thinzel Washington, San Mateo

From The Beat: You have such skills, TW, that we hate to think of you endangering that fine mind and strong body by putting yourself in the same place your pops took those slugs, or your uncle fried his brain. It's clear from this tight poem, as well as many others you've written, that you know what's up. You can see the consequences of the thug life that 2Pac spoke of, and yet — even after seeing what happened to 2Pac, your dad, your uncle, your homies — you embrace the life. We hope you decide to put your feet down on another path before you find yourself permanently incapacitated by bullets, bars or beneath six feet of dirt.

Hurt

I've been hurt quite a few times in my life. The first time I really felt hurt was when I was eight years old. My house got raided and I was taken away from my mom and brothers. That really hurt me.

Then, when I had to move in with my father, his wife, my stepmother, always treated me like a piece of crap. She would brain wash me, tell me I would never amount to anything.

Now look at me — in and out of the Hall, gang banging. I guess she got the best of me.

-Tonio, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Nah, we don't think so. We're sure it didn't help to be looked down upon, and we're sorry that happened. But you know yourself well enough to realize that you have to accept a good deal of the responsibility for your present condition. And that takes nothing away from your difficult childhood. We're sorry for the pain it caused you. But we know that you're a pretty smart guy. You can do better, and we think you will.

What Makes Me Smile

It makes me happy when I see my mom and it makes the time go by fast. So I hope I get out of this place and go home and eat some good food and some things that you can't have here.

I smile when I'm happy, and I'm not happy in here. I haven't been out to see my mom. I would like to be at the beach with some of my homeboys. But it doesn't happen like that, so I sit in my cell, not having any fun in the sun.

It's hell in the Hall. But I'll be getting out of here sometime in the fall. And I'm not coming back to this hole they call "The Hall". Or that crap hole they call jail, or the pen, or CYA. All that crap is not for me.

-D, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good. What's your plan for staying out of the system? It will help to have one. You have time now to think deeply about where your life goes from here. Don't waste this opportunity. Read a lot. If there are serious subjects you'd like to explore, we'll help you find the books you need. But you have to ask us.

**jail, or the pen, or CYA. All
that crap is not for me.**

Lies

As I live a life of lies
my heart feels this weakness
because I see no future for myself.
In the system
I search for justice,
but all I can hear
is that same sad song telling me
I'll never make it out of this scandalous place.
But something deep within tells me:
young soldier — you're going to make it.

-T, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Yes, listen to that deep voice. That's where the truth is spoken. No lies admitted there, where the deep voice dwells. Listen to that voice. What is it saying?

Dulled My Senses

Over the years I've always shown sympathy, but lately I've been exposed to more dramatic events which have kind of dulled my senses. Now I feel I have lost some sympathy towards others and others' situations.

It's difficult — I can still feel for other people who are in a worse predicament or who are less fortunate than me, and also my friends and family, but I have a hard time feeling sympathy for others due to past events which have happened in my life. Not that it has effected me as a person, it's just I have been exposed to more of the real world which has tweaked upon my definition of sympathy towards things and people.

-Faleofa, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's the honesty that gets to us in this piece — the clarity of your self-evaluation, and even a sense of sadness about your exposure to the "real world," comes through your words. What is it that you've been exposed to that has hardened you towards others? How can you begin to reconcile the eye-opening experience you've had with your longing to feel sympathy towards others again?

A Big Fat Smile

What makes me smile
Is my dreams
And thoughts about
Doing all the things
That I want to do
When I get out
And when I picture
Myself rollin'
Pocket swollin'
Wit' a mouth that's golden
And a ride that isn't stolen
Wit' license that I'll be holdin'
I smile
It makes me happy to think
Of these things so I smile
When I dream about these things
I get lost into a cloud
Dreaming of success and makin' my moms proud
Picturin' myself rollin' wit' a golden smile
Maserati, lookin' clean, puffin' on a black 'n' mild
A top notch wifey and a platinum child
Lookin' at me with love and a big fat smile

-Young Kc, San Mateo

From The Beat: You made us smile while letting us know what makes you smile. It seems like you want to get out and stay out. Also, you know in order to do that you have to go that extra mile. What kind of father would you be to your platinum child? What kind of man would you be towards your top notch wifey? We have faith in you and we don't take your passion lightly.

I Thought

I thought I knew more than that.
I can barely read Dr. Suess' "Cat In The Hat".
Sixteen, with a diploma,
and I can't even add 1 + 1 for ya.

-Ishmael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Here we have proof that good things can come in small packages. This is a fine poem. It says a lot, and not just about the poet. So much meaning into so small a poem. Great work.

The Way Someone Else Would Feel

Something that has hurt me the most was a person who shot my big brother. At the time, I wasn't able to deal with my pain, anger, and sadness, because every day, when I saw my brother in the hospital, it made me sad to see my brother in that condition. I have got over it now and put it in God's hands, but it took me a while to get over it.

When I was hurt from my brother being shot, I wanted to seek revenge, but after a while, that made me think to never do nothing, or wish anything like that on someone else, because the same way I was feeling is the same way someone else would feel.

My brother was shot six times and was in the hospital for two weeks. At first I wanted to get revenge, but I knew that sooner or later it would come back to haunt me. the advice I would give someone else in this situation is to let it go and leave it in God's hands.

If you seek revenge, no good will come out of it, and in the long run, you will regret doing what you did.

-Choppa B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you remember how you came to see that the pain you cause is equal to the pain you receive? How did you figure out that your pain is only worse than someone else's pain (even an enemy's) because you are feeling it, but in all other ways, it is the same? We feel very proud of you for understanding something so profound so young, but we hope you can shed light on the process that led you to this truth so that you might guide other young people there.

My Time To Shine

What's up Beat? What's up readers? Well, this is my last time writing because in two days, on Sunday, the 25th of July, at 9:00 a.m., I'll be released. I'm 18 years young, off probation, and the rest of my life to do as I please.

It's my time to shine bright like the mighty stars above. Shout outs to my homies. Stay up, stay safe, and stay positive. Strive for the betterment of your education and well-being. Reach for the stars.

-Oso, San Mateo

From The Beat: What excellent advice you give, Oso. Now, it's up to you to apply it to your own life so that you can not only remain free, but grow and thrive and succeed in a legitimate way so that you can be that desperately needed role model. We will definitely miss your keen mind and willingness to step up and take your writing seriously. There is no reason this should be the last time you write for us: we would love to hear from you along the way, Oso, and print your words of wisdom in The Beat Without for all those youngsters coming up who can benefit from a YG's hard-learned lessons...

Sometimes I Cry

Sometimes when I'm alone
 I cry because I'm on my own
 The tears are bitter and warm
 They flow with life but take no form
 I cry because my heart is torn
 And I difficult to cry on
 If I had an ear to confide
 In I would cry
 Among my treasured friends
 But who you know that stops that long
 To help another carry on
 It's painful and sad
 And sometimes I cry because no one cares.

-Manuel, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's a sad thing that you don't have a friend who will stop long enough to hear you out. Is there no one to whom you can look for help in carrying on, in dealing with the sadness and pain that's a part of every life? If you can't find anyone else to hear you out, the page will always listen to the story the pencil tells.

Too Much

Too much goin' on
 It's like singin' tha same song
 Everything has gone wrong
 Sittin' in my cell
 Goin' thru so much hell
 As I watch my tears hit tha flo'
 Tha more my heart turns cold
 All this crap is getting' old
 People sayin' I'm too bold
 Homies dyin', family is cryin'
 Yet I'm addicted to tha ghetto
 I ain't in it for the fame
 I'm just tryna maintain
 And keepin' myself sane is what I gotta do
 I ain't actin' a fool
 I got hopes and dreams, too
 Just 'cause I run tha streets
 And I carry a heat
 Doesn't mean life is somethin' I can beat.

-Pockets, San Mateo

From The Beat: We like the conclusion you come to — the usual chest-beating proud gangsta bravado is cut with a dose of reality by your last line. Why do you think you're addicted to the ghetto? Is there a possibility that you may be able to find sanity more easily up out of the 'hood than deep within it? The pain, though it grows old, never lessens. Maintaining can be so much easier than it's been thus far. What are your hopes and dreams? How can you begin to reach towards them?

Planting Flowers

I wish I was not here
 I wish I was out
 I wish I could plant flowers with my mom
 and watch them sprout
 I wish I could do that one moment over
 That one moment that got me locked up
 I wish I was home.

-Lil' D, San Mateo

From The Beat: We love the image of you planting flowers with your mom and watching them sprout. Now, it's up to you to be the flower that your mom has been watching sprout for a long time. It's time for you to bloom, to open your petals and let your beauty shine. You owe it to that gardener in your life who has watered and fed you, who has tried to protect you from parasites, and who treasures you as the finest thing her garden has produced. You owe it to your mom.

What I Feel

What up wit' it, Beat. I have a lot of sympathy. I hurt and been hurt plenty of times. I hurt when I'm doing bad — "loved ones." I hurt when I'm doing good — "haters." Tell me, should I be happy, or mad, or even sad for the people who hurt 'cause of the things that I do?

I have empathy for the people who hurt because I'm doing bad, because those are my loved ones who care about me. I feel sad for my loved ones when they're hurting inside because they can't do anything to help me while I'm locked up. And I feel good when those haters are mad and hurt when I'm doing good because they can't do anything about it but run up, and I doubt that. It also makes me smile when I achieve an award, get a job, or even do good in Juvenile Hall like stay a "top step" and stay out my room — that brings a smile to my face — but I feel no sympathy for them.

Don't get me wrong: it hurts so bad when I'm doing so bad and they're just smiling 'cause of it. So tell me why do they hate — because I look better than them, or is it because I have more friends? Maybe it's because I get all the attention. But I got one word for you haters — hate, 'cause I don't give a rats-ass about you unachievers 'cause only I can bring me down and only I can let y'all get to me.

So do what you got to do and I will do what I have to do, and that's stay doing good and staying loyal to my family and keep making you haters hurt and be mad.

-Ju-Nut, San Mateo

From The Beat: What's strange to us about this piece is that while you say you could care less about the haters, it seems like you're looking to show them up, to gloat about how good you are when they're trying to bring you down. What will it take to ignore 'em? Even better, is there any way you can get at some of the haters — maybe just one or two — by being cool and helping them do what they've gotta do as well? It's one thing to have the individual strength to get through this time, but there's a need for those who can step up and help their brothers and sisters as well. You can be that type of leader if you rise above the hating.

A Time For All Things

If a penny is worth a thought and a hug is worth a dime,
 then words of wisdom should be worth a lifetime.

Even though I'm young, and I know it,
 all the old Gs and others talk like I don't show it.

Some of their words I catch, but most I delete
 because I am a man standing on two feet.

I must learn my lessons as I grow up
 no matter how bad I might mess up.

There is a time to talk and a time to be heard
 and a time to shut up to hear wise words.

So, as I speak, please listen to this
 because I've lost freedom days to put my heart in it.
 If a penny is worth a thought and a dime is worth a hug,
 please take time and read the message above.

-Phatboy, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a wonderful poem, Phatboy. How do you learn your lessons, by watching or by listening? What lessons have you learned in here? How do you know which words to "catch" and which to "delete"? How will the lessons you've learned change your behavior on the outs?

It Really Hurts

It really hurts
when I get locked up.
It really hurts
when I talk to my parents
and they cry 'cause I'm leaving.
It really hurts
when my sister writes me.
It really hurts
when I write this!

-Ko'na, San Mateo

From The Beat: What makes this piece deep is that in a few short lines you manage to transfer some of the pain you're feeling to the page. Therefore, when you conclude that it hurts when you write this piece, we almost feel the line as we read it. What will it take to confront the pain you're feeling and deal with it by remedying the situations that are causing it? What will it take to stay on the outs with your parents and support them, to set an example for your sister, to avoid being locked back up?

I'm Sorry Mama

I know one person I hurt dearly, and that's my moms. When I first came in here, I had to see my mom crying. That hurt the most for me, but I know it hurt even more for her.

Out of the seven months I been in here, I only cried once — that's when my mom was crying. I hated myself for putting her through what she was going through. When I called my house, they would tell me that she was not sleeping and just crying all the time.

The first visit with her, I could not even look her in the eyes. Once the case was over and I knew what was gonna happen, it was easier to talk to my mom. I love my mom with all my heart, and to see her like she was hurt so bad.

-Tru B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When we read pieces like yours, it makes us want to cry too, because we know how many mothers like yours are crying right now. We know that you know what your mother wants most for you, so we want to know whether you're going to give her what she wants. It's in your hands. Do you know what we're talking about?

Hurts So Bad

What hurt me the most was when my father left the family. Actually, my mom didn't want him no more. I didn't want him to leave in the first place. I wanted to go with him, but he told me to stay and take care of the family.

But it hurt a lot when my father was gone. He taught me everything I should know. He taught me this and that, always caring, never wanted me to hang with the wrong people.

Nowadays, I barely see him. The last time I seen him was a couple of months ago. And we didn't even talk much. So now he out there with a new family while I'm in here still thinking about that day we left him.

-Jose B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're sorry that your parent's marriage fell apart and hurt you so badly. Have you ever talked to your mom about why she didn't want him around? There must have been reasons for it, and knowing what they were might help you feel better about what happened. Can you tell your father that you miss him? Can you invite him to be a part of your new family's life?

Finally Free

What's up Beat? This is Oso, dropping some lines about what's going down with me. Pues, I'm 18 and I've been on probation for almost four and a half years. I've been to the Ranch, a Group Home in Vallejo, LA, and San Jose, plus I've done hella, hella time.

I remember when I first started getting locked up. It was when I was walkin' in the park, which I still do. I hate to admit it, but I have so many good memories up in here. It's a shame because in my eyes, the staff make this so-called jail seem like a Boys' and Girls Club with hella more restrictions.

Anyways, enough of all that pedo (trouble). Now I can finally say I ain't never coming back to this place. I'm getting out in nine days, and off probation! No more county drawe's, no more punk staff, no more window warriors, and no more chances!

C'mon, I said it: "No more chances." I'm anxious to hit las calles, (the streets), de South San Francisco. There's a lot of funk out there for me, and even though I got a good head on my shoulders, drama always seems to find me, and everybody knows when the cycle of retaliation begins, it won't stop. So I guess that's something to look forward to. Ha, ha.

Besides all the funk out there, I got my lady waiting for me, and I'm looking towards going to a trade school like Job Corp, CCOC, or this program for youths that Mr. Jones was telling me about. Oh, and you know I'm gonna party till the sun comes.

Well, it's about that time for me to shake the spot. Push, pull, and strive. Keep your eyes on the prize. Amor y respeto, (Love and respect).

-Oso, San Mateo

From The Beat: How exciting, Oso, that after all this time, you're about to be cut loose. We admire your commitment never to come back (which, we hope, includes a commitment never to go to any other lockup). But, of course, we worry that you'll be caught slipping, and not be your rivals, but by the law. The next step in this system's path is no Boys and Girls Club, but a nasty place of isolation, emotional violence, and loneliness. So, on the subject retaliation that you speak of, we do have something to say: forget it, or prepare for your next experience behind bars. By all means, have the good time you've been dreaming about for so long, but take whatever precautions you need to take so that you can play the next day, too. And drop us a line from time to time. We'd love to know how you're doing. Thank you for taking The Beat as seriously as you have.

now he out
there with a
new family while
I'm in here still
thinking about
that day
we left him



The Person That Hurt Me

The person that hurt me was a person that I was talking to. At first I didn't care about what my ninjas said about this person, 'cause I was just talking to her.

But once she told me that she wanted to be with me, so I went along with it. We did everything together and my ninja was getting mad because I would be always be late when we had business to do. He told me that I was messing up business and he warned me that she would hurt me.

I didn't talk to him because I felt like he didn't care and that he only cared about business. One day one of my ninjas told me that she was at the movies with my cousin., so I waited outside the movie and they came out to wait and when me and my ninjas start beating his ass. But after that day, she never talked to me again and everything was like clockwork again except for my heart.

-Young Pookie B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What an honest and sad piece. We're sorry this happened. Are you sure she and your cousin were doing something wrong or were they just hanging out? Did you ever try to talk to her about what happened? We're sorry you got hurt, and we hope someone who is more commuted in the future. By the way, love is as important as business.

My List Of Smiles

Chillin' at the mall
With friends and all
That's what makes me smile

Kickin' with the homeboys and homegirls
And relaxin' at the pool
That's what makes me smile

Havin' moms buy me clothes and shoes
Getting my allowance to buy some booze
That's what makes me smile

-Big Rex, San Mateo

From The Beat: We know that your list of smiles would make anybody smile. However, we can't help but point out the fact that you take your mother's hard earned money to go and buy booze. And that's what makes you smile. Does your mother work hard? Do you think it's right to receive that money and spend it on something that she probably wouldn't want you to buy? Just thoughts — that's all.

Hurt Feeling

It hurts when the people you know
dies & that only leaves to sleepless nights
and many cries. It hurts your head
trying to wonder why the ones
you love always dies.

We hurt in many ways--only "God"
can tell why. Look up to him and the
(?) is right there between your eyes.

-T-Boo, Virginia

From The Beat: Will the hurting end once everybody comes to respect life and refrain from actions that destroy it? What can you as a hurting individual do to make that happen? And just how long will it take?

Sympathy

I feel sympathy sometimes because I hate to hear bad things happening to people in my community. I know it's a lot of moms out there crying, and that's sad to me. This is simply because their sons are getting caught up in the drug life.

I sit back and think what attracts a person to a fast lifestyle that only attracts negativity. I feel sympathy for the young men who don't care any more because it's sad to see. Imagine living for no purpose, to not get anything out of life.

It's time for young people to wake up and take the blindfold off their eyes. I'm not trying to preach neither because I'm not perfect myself — I too fall short sometimes.

I guess the moral of the story is if you getting out, handle your business and try to stay positive while doing it. So until next time, stay up and one love.

-Diddy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We appreciate the message you are delivering here, Diddy, and we think it has even more power precisely because you, too, sometimes fall short of what you know is right. We know following this advice is sometimes easier said than done, but it is the goal — to live life with a purpose — that gives life meaning, even when we fall short. What is your purpose? What do you want to accomplish?

What Would My Mother Do?

Yeah, I've felt sympathy a lot of times, in particular, when seeing my ninja get killed in front of me at a party. We were from the same block, but because of somebody getting they butt whooped, they came back shooting.

He was right on the side of me. Then, boom, boom, boom, boom. He got shot right through his back to his heart.

That hurts all the time because if I was a few inches to the right. I wouldn't be writing this Beat. I feel he took a bullet for me and watchin' his mom made me think hard, like what is she gone do now. Her only child, dead at the age of fifteen. Most importantly, what would my mother do if it were for me?

-D-Paypa Bound B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a chilling story, and one that would give us nightmares. Besides the psychic scars you bear for having been so close to death, and witnessing the violent death of a friend, did this tragedy change anything about the way you live your life? When you think about how your mother would deal with your premature death at the hands of another, does it move you to do anything — or not to do anything?

**I feel sympathy
for the young
men who don't
care any more
because it's
sad to see.**

Witness To An Assault

There was a group of young men coming from a party when everybody started scraping on this kid from another area. They didn't like him, so they asked him where was he from. He claimed his turf. Then, one of the individuals in the group took flight and knocked him down.

Then everyone started hitting on him, punched him, and ripped his shirt off. One of his shoes fell off while he tried to fight back, but there were just too many people punching him, socking him, and trying to beat him up. Then, after a while, cars were rolling by, honking their horns, and telling them to stop. So, then he wasn't moving, so I told them to stop and grabbed one of the boys off of him. He was shaking like he was having a seizure.

Then, an old lady came by and helped me put him against a fence, while she called the ambulance, and waited there patiently for it to come.

I got on a bus and went about my business. I prayed to God that night that he was all right, but I never found out who it was or what happened to.

-Ken Duce B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admired you for talking about this in the Beat discussion period, and we admire you for writing about it now. What you describe — that wonderful but terrible ability to put yourself in the shoes of another, even a rival — is called empathy, and is even a greater gift of character than sympathy. How did your homies relate to you after you intervened to stop their assault? Do you ever dream about this event?

You Can Count On Me

(Dedicated to Estrella)

You can count on me when you're feeling down.

You can count on me when you just want me to be around.

You can count on me when you need a shoulder to cry on.

You can count on me when you need someone to lean on.

You can count on me no matter where you're at.

You can count on me and that's a fact.

You can count on me when I tell you to never look back.

But most all you can count on me when you come back home.

One love

-Alicia GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a really supportive poem, Alicia. You are clearly a kind-hearted person, Alicia. Now you need to take that kindness and apply it towards yourself, too.

I Don't Care

There's been a lot of times I've said things [like I don't care]. But the way I see it, everyone has to care about something, or else they wouldn't continue living. When a person seriously gets to the point of not caring, usually suicide is their next step.

But there are a lot of things I could care less about, like money, cars and clothes. To me, it was always about family. They're the only things that will always stay true to me.

-Chad, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We're glad you have family that you can turn to; some people don't have that. We're curious what else you care about. Your future? Your contribution to your family? Friends? Community?

Dear Mom

She told me to stay out the streets because that's where I'm going to die, but I don't listen. My head is hard, talking back, and acting hard, but I tell her this game is hard. They got me scared to plant my seed. I'm scared of how it's going to grow, living in a messed up world and a messed up time.

I'm telling you, we can't do anything anymore. It's bigger than me and out of my hands. That's why I'm praying to God: "Oh Heavenly Father, keep my head on top of the water. It's your world and we're your kids. Why are we trying our best to keep it together? Why some of us ain't gonna see the next day?"

Mom, I grew up and I got that feeling like I don't give a damn. They call me "Lil' Dakota," but names ain't a damn thing. I'll give all this up, this dope game. I know you made a bad decision when you smoked dope, but I bet I did some stuff you don't know, and I'm sorry I didn't get to the 12th grade. But I still love you and can't anything ever change that.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

The world you describe — that feeling that you don't know which way to go to get out of a trap — that's desperate. We don't know what to tell you, Lil' Dakota, except that change begins with the individual. Do you think God could be giving you a test to see what you're prepared to give back (to God) in exchange for a better world? We don't know the answer, but we do know that some youngsters face what you're facing and come through the other side. So, at least for some, we know it can be done.

Wishing To Be Free

I wish I was free

Young, out, creepin' on the street

Sometimes I regret that crime

I wish I had the power to turn back the wheel
of time

I'm so tired of the Hall

Stuck on lockdown starin' at the walls

I'm tired of these clothes

And I'm sick and tired of wearin' the same old
drawers

This place seems like a test

All I want to do is lay down and be put to rest

I'm tired of this life

When I'm in here I don't feel right

But I'm goin' hold my might

And struggle not to fight

I'm a youngsta from my city

Quick to show no pity

I'm tired of this place

I want to be free

I don't even care if you consider me a G

All I keep sayin' is

I wish I was free

Lil' P, San Mateo

From The Beat: Maybe you want more than one person can have — both freedom from incarceration and freedom to do your thing on the street. From our perspective, by choosing one, you have to choose not to do the other. Which means you're going to have to choose between the life that led you here (and will lead you to much bigger, more secure places down the line), or a different kind of life that may seem less exciting to you now, but doesn't risk your freedom. Which is it going to be?

**most all you can count on me
when you come back home.**

To My Baby Cousin

You've been thru so much
 I see you still fiendin' that motherly touch
 I haven't been around to see you grow up
 And I truly regret that
 But remember, never give up
 Can't let nobody bring you down
 You got so much knowledge
 But you just ain't usin' it right
 It's an everyday fight
 Believe me; I know!
 Cousin, realize you don't belong livin' like this
 You see what I've gone thru
 And you know what I've done
 So why not learn from my mistakes?
 Why go on regrettin' tha past
 About livin' so fast?
 You deserve so much better
 I know you got fed up about problems at home
 And you're feelin' alone
 But when you get to thinkin' like that
 Remember that you always got me.

-Pockets, San Mateo

From The Beat: This does all that words can say, but the example you set will be more powerful than any piece you can deliver. Can you and your cousin provide each other with a support, helping each other out of the life that's managed to bring both of you down? Can you live from your own mistakes, making the lessons so much clearer to see?

On the Come Up

Right now I am on the come up, tryin' to stack my dead presidents — but not by doing the same old street come up! I am stacking that slow money. Every two weeks I get a check.

But I can't get money slow, so I decided to get two jobs! Because these little jobs don't cash out enough. I work for the magazine I be writin' to, The Beat Within, and I work at the Oakland Coliseum.

You know money never comes fast enough, and always leaves too soon. But I am doing my best to keep it in my pocket. I may not be gettin' as much as my homies are, all the folks out there doin' their thang — but it's all green! And I stay gettin' paid. Well, I gots to cut. So late'.

-Shomoe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You never know, you might be making more, if you count in the time the "easy money" folks live broke behind bars wearing someone else's clothes — not to mention how much they spend on dope. Plus, why would anyone in their right mind sell their freedom for a price? It's nothing nice for them or their families. Whereas you're making people proud. And who knows what pay you'll be making a year from now?

**You know money
 never comes fast
 enough, and always
 leaves too soon.**

Hurt s So Bad

I'm just 'bout my food at McDonald's. As soon as I sat down, some guy about sixty years old came by me and said, "F you" to me for no reason. Then I asked him why he said it. He offered me to step outside and I did. I left my food at McDonald's and there were a lot of bums there, so I went back to get my food as the man left. When I finished my food, me and my friend went to look for that guy. That guy went to the library. When he saw me, he took off his coat and said, "Come on, let's go!"

I took the bat I had in my pocket and smacked him on the head. He started bleeding all over the place. In a minute my friend came up to him and threw a big rock at his head.

A couple of weeks later, I saw the same guy driving in his car, so when he stopped at the stop sign, I threw it at his window. He came out and there was a big scar on his face, so I just left.

That happened about two years ago, when I was fifteen, so I regret that I did it, because what I should have done was just leave and not pay any attention to that guy. But that's fine, because I was too immature and that's what immature people do—they make stupid mistakes. If that happened now, I probably wouldn't even look at that man. That would be a much smarter thing to do. If you think about it, what's the point of even asking him why he said that to me? You wouldn't get anything out of it, anyway, and more likely, I would never see that person again. It's like a dope fiend came up to you on crack, all messed up, who can't fight, can't even walk straight, and said something to you. There is no point of talking to him or fighting him, because he's about to die, anyway, and he doesn't realize what he's doing.

-Johnny B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you, Johnny, that attacking that man was the reaction of a child. When we think of all the possible consequences (including you being put away for a very long time), it makes us shudder. So it is very encouraging to see that you have matured enough to admit that, and to see a much better way of doing things. Ignoring him is the best solution, you're right. Maybe if you ever see him again, you can be nice to him. How did you mature to this point? Is it just that you're older, or did you learn some things that give you a new perspective?

My Princess In Mexico

It hurts so bad that my little princess is in Mexico. I hate it when I can't see her. I need her by my side.

I hope that tomorrow my PO tells me if I can go to Mexico with her. I pray to God, and I been praying, to get a temporary release so I can go see my girlfriend and my family, because everybody is going.

I talked to her on Saturday for eighty minutes, then the phone card went out. I haven't talked to her ever since. I hope that she stays faithful to me, because I really love her with all my heart. I've never loved anybody that much, and I don't want to get hurt.

When I get out of this situation and pay my debts, I hope to get married to her. I love you, Yvette.

-Krushier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You definitely have a powerful motivation to get your life together so that you're never in a situation like this again. If you don't get that TR, stay chill and you for sure eventually will.

Sunshine

Tryin' to find sunshine
Living in the ghetto
Daily tryin'
To dodge one time
To make a million
Hustlin', tryin' to find
Sunshine
I keep my head
Even tho' I feel like giving up sometime
I keep my head up, tryin' to find sunshine
What happened to the sun on my lawn
It's all gloomy and gray
Got a feeling tha 5-0.
Goin' to try to play me today
It took a long time
For Young Slim just to hop out tha game
Had a lil' girl, had to make a change
Holla.

-Young Slim B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We feel for you trying to find the sun in a dark world. So, now that you are responsible for another human being who needs sunshine in her life, what changes will you make? What are you willing to sacrifice for her? How will you stand up to old friends and homies who want you to do things that will lead you back to jail, knowing that a life depends on you?

Not So Far From Free

I have recently arrived at Camp. It feels great to be here. All the stress I was feeling in the Hall, seems to be gone.

Being here lets me feel one step closer to home. I have gone home for the first time in two-and-a-half months. It felt great to see everybody!

But enough about me, I want to let everyone know — don't give up! The time you are serving will be done one day, and you'll be free! And I know it might be hard, you might have to stress; and that is exactly how I felt. I think we all feel it.

But keep on trying, because if you quit now, they have won the fight. That's right — you lose to the system. And personally, I know we all have what it takes to win. So, if you're still locked up tomorrow, or in two weeks, or in two months — don't quit — because you're not far from free!

-D-Frank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a great message you're putting out, drawing on your own experience, strength and hope. Time dissolves and you're not far from free when daily you refuse to accept defeat. Props on reaching Camp and seeing home again.

The Way I Feel

Ya, what's up with y'all? This is Culero, kicking it with The Beat Within. The thing that hurts me so much ... wait, hold up! I'm a try to do a poem, 'cause I think poems are sick!

Now I only tried it once, so this is my second poem
I'm about to do. Let me try. Check it out —
"So Much Pain"

it hurts me so much when i see
my mom when she comes to see me
i just want to fall on my knees
and ask for god to forgive me please
being in here seeing other guys in the shower
just wondering what's the matter with me
why am i here an' not on the outs
giving my girl a flower
it even hurts me more when i see
my little brother getting caught up
he should've stayed cool and stayed in school
instead of going outside and acting a fool
but now he's back on the outs
with the ankle monitor
but i wish he would be a leader not be a follower
but for now i'm gonna bounce soon like a
grasshopper
and go to camp till then now i'm out peace beat
i'm out one love to all in the hall

-Culero, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can hardly believe this is only the second poem you've ever written. You definitely have a feel for it, putting your thoughts and feelings down in lines and rhymes. So show your brother you can change, teach by example — 'cause you're his main man. It could be the only way he'll understand.

**you're not far
from free!**

**wish I would have
stopped sellin' dope and
weed after the first time
I came here. But I didn't
learn then.**

How I Feel Waiting For Camp

Today, I'm not really feeling these topics, 'cause right now I feel hella friggin' mad, 'cause Camp Sweeney is takin' hella long for me to get up there.

I just want to get out of the friggin' Hall, 'cause this ain't me! I just wish I would have stopped sellin' dope and weed after the first time I came here. But I didn't learn then.

This time I've learned a lot, 'cause I've been here for a while now and had nothin' but time to think about what I'm gon' do when I get out — how I'm gon' keep myself from comin' back.

I just can't wait to get out, so I can get my life together and be with the ones I love and get a job, after I pimp the Camp Sweeney situation. I'm gon' finish it without any write-up's or anything; so I may be out in four or five months!

I just can't wait to get home to my family and baby'momma! I miss them hella friggin' much! All I'm waitin' on now is to get my Camp release. I'll holla, Beat!

-Darryl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We understand your impatience when you know where you're going next, yet you're still in the Hall doing dead time. And we admire your positive plans both for your stay at Camp and your time home free where you wanna be! However, your anger now should warn you that if things do go a little wrong and you get slowed down at Camp, you will be tempted to do something impulsive. Don't "run" no matter what, fair or unfair, short-time, long-time — keep your head up, stay positive!

Smile

I smile when I'm with you
when I see you smile.
I smiled even brighter
when you had my first child.
Now I smile with the time shared
between me and you
'cause whenever your around
smiling is all I do.
Looking in your green eyes
just let me now
no matter where you at
my heart will follow.

-Bizzy, Virginia

From The Beat: It's a lyric poem, and lyric poems for hundreds of years have centered most movingly on the subject of love. Do you think that a young man's potential for poetic expression increases when he "falls in love"? Do you think that serious poetry about love can actually change lives?

That's Messed Up

that's messed up
that i got out of camp
and had a warrant
twenty days later
that's messed up
that i got locked up
on the fourth of july
right in front of my daughter
that's messed up
that the d-a is trying
to send me to y-a
for eighteen months
on a warrant
that's messed up
that my daughter
and her mom
got hit by a car
that's messed up
that i might not
be able to see
my son born
that's messed up
that people can't be
home with family
that's messed up
that i couldn't be out
for my mom's promotion
that's messed up
that my whole family
is dead or in jail
that's messed up
that i been locked up
fifteen times

-Crazy Legs, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We pray your daughter and her mom are okay, as well as your son on the way! Have you done anything since you left Camp to prove you've changed? Got a job or put in applications? Registered for school? It's the job of the DA to say you haven't changed, and it's your job to make a paper trail to back up your claim that you're not who you used to be. We hope you get the chance to be with your family again, and prove you know how to live free and responsibly back home with them.

These Things Make Me Smile

people who appreciate what i do
going home from a long week at camp
little jokes that i hear here and there
waking up in the morning and starting a new day
county outings which always are fun
knowing the beat within is here so i can write a piece
being a part of a team like baseball
hearing people giving good compliments about me
when i know i've done a good job
these are the little things that make me smile

-Peanut, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This little poem makes us smile about a mile wide, 'cause Peanut's become wise — sees the simple things that make us all smile inside and out, and says them out loud. You do The Beat program proud.

What Is a Homie?

what is a homie to all of you
to me a real homie would not lead you
into danger in any kind of way
during my three-and-a-half months in juvenile hall
the only person who writes me is my female
and now i have a two-and-a-half month old baby on the way
and the only ones who came to visit me were my mom and grandpa
so for those of you who say you have a homie
just think about what a friend really is

-Pelon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You tell it like it is. And thanks for sending out this pop-quiz to those who still don't know, the ones who kick it and drink and smoke, won't really be there for you or your folks. You come to know, after you're left alone on your own.

Pain and Suffering With(out) Dad

Well, I know a little about pain and suffering! I've lived most of my life hurting — hurting for different reasons on different occasions.

The fact that my pops was in and out of jail and on a lot of drugs. That stuff didn't hurt at first because I did not understand that it was not normal for my pops not to be there for his kids. Shortly after I found out that it was not normal, I started to miss my pops and feel hurt that he wouldn't give up the drugs and alcohol to see or be with his kids.

That stuff hurt, and it still kinda does. He slowed down on that shhh though, for the most part, when he had my little brother. He don't do no dope no more, as far as I know. He says he is trying to quit drinking, and he has a week clean off of that — and he ain't smoked weed in a few months, from what he tells me.

I'm proud of him. I just wish it could have happened earlier in my life. Stay up... Don't stress the small stuff.

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You sound less "crazy" every week. In fact, you're beginning to sound downright mature, even wise. It's great that you can support your dad in his recovery, but it will always hurt that he wasn't there for you when you were growing up. Really, the most important thing that could happen from this, would be your seeing just how important it is for you to be clean and sober. The pain in your heart tells you that addiction is a family disease. Don't pass it on. Let it stop with you. Staying clean will help you reach those goals you wrote about last week in The Beat, too.

Pain

Pain has no face
no shape or color
pain attack us all
from kid to grandmuva
pain shows no sympathy
'cause it don't really care
and don't matter who you are
'cause it has no fear
and with pain you can't hide
under beds and sheds
'cause no matter where i go
pain seem to find me

-Bizzy, Virginia

From The Beat: This has a universal ring, and we can all imagine ourselves dealing with this "faceless" feature of our lives. Did you have in mind emotional as well as physical pain?

The Beat

Fatherhood

I would like to know how to be a father. It seems hard to be a dad. I have a four-week-old son! This is my first son. I never thought the day would come I would have a son — and I would like to know how to be a real dad!

I know that being here in Juvenile Hall, is not being a real dad. But it seems like I had to go to jail to really know that being in jail is not being a real dad. When I get out of jail, I am going to be the best dad I can be. The only people I am going to be around, are my son and my baby's momma!

I would like my son to grow up and be a man, and get a job and be somebody — but how can I help with that if I'm going back and forth to the Hall?

-Robert, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Is your son your first child? 'Cause son or daughter, every child deserves to have a father in its life. That said, the birth of your first son just might be your wake-up call! You'll still need to have people in your life, friends and/or family you can talk to — but choose those who are a good influence on you, who will help you be the father your son deserves.

Smile

what makes me
smile — money
what makes me
smile — girls
what makes me
smile — god
what makes me
smile — waking
up in the morning
smile — smile
smile — smile
what makes me
smile — getting a release
what makes me
smile — new clothes
what makes me
smile — new shoes
what makes me
smile — weed
smile — smile
smile — smile
what makes me
smile — a car with rims
what makes me
smile — guns
what makes me
smile — my mom
what makes me
smile — my lil' sister
smile — smile
smile — smile
what makes me
smile — my birthday
smile — smile
smile — smile when
the beat within
come to the hall
it make' me smile
smile — smile
smile — smile
it's nothing like smiling
i really like smiling

-Jonathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your smiling poem makes us smile a mile wide. But now, we didn't smile even a little when you smiled at a gun, but the rest of your poem brings a smile bright as the sun!

Sympathy For My Grandmother

I think about my mother and my grandmother all the time! About the stress they go through because of how they fear for my younger brother, my Uncle Terrence, and me — getting hurt or maybe killed.

It's worse for my grandmother, because she's dealing with my uncle in San Qu'in and with my being in Juvenile Hall. And she tries to support the both of us. For example, she comes to visit me every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. And she sends my uncle money on his books, and goes to visit him, too.

I just stress, thinking about what I put them through. But putting a smile on their faces when they see me doing cool, that makes me smile, too!

-Unefarious, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is the second week now we've wondered if we got your name right! Please accept our apologies if we're messing it up, and correct us. It sounds like your grandmother is quite a woman. She has our sympathy and our respect. And we sure hope you can bring a smile to her face, by no longer putting your freedom at risk via the choices you make.

people would rather see
what makes you cry
than see what makes you smile

What Makes You Smile, Will Make You Cry

the same thing that will make you smile
will be the same thing to make you cry
looking for an explanation but no reply
why — you ask me
okay — here it goes
because people would rather see what makes you cry
than see what makes you smile
because of their hate, pain, past or present
these emotions are relentless
but through it all still find the strength to smile
regardless of the situation that you're facin'
frowns you should be erasin'
depression, pain and anger, are just the ingredients
for happiness — so stop the madness
so what makes you smile —
when you're with the person you love
spending life's precious moments reaching for the stars above
does it make you smile when you feel the warm and tender kiss
when your two lips engage and embrace a sweet, tingling bliss
indulge your sensual pleasure to limitless measures
whether right or wrong the feelings are so strong
it's the most incredible bond
holding my angel all night until daybreak dawns
so you know what makes me smile
is the same thing that makes me cry
when i first left you, i thought i'd never be the same
man, i lost my one true love i ever had
— my freedom —

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Does sensual pleasure without limits lead you to consequences that will destroy — the very thing you most enjoy? Often you've backed emotional detachment, as a strategy for living, but is that just an after-the-fact reaction, to misgivings you get, like warnings before the storm hits? Perhaps you can love without measure, when right and wrong are values you treasure, and you're not addicted to pleasures, that make you pay the next day with what you love most — 'cause then your heart is toast, and your angel, ghost!

Mom Makes Me Smile

I smile when my mom has a smile on her face but when she comes and visits me I would smile on the outside but on the inside I feel like crying.

Even though I smile everyday, in the Hall there ain't shhh to smile about in this place. The only way I will have a true smile is when they set me free and I'm in my mother's arms.

-Your Son, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How can you make it so that you and your mother are never separated again? How can you make up for lost time with your mother? How can you make the best of your time in the Hall? And what must you do to stay out of the Hall for good?

RIP Jay-Jay

man i was so heated when my ninja
james johnson aka jay jay was shot
man that trash is messed up on mommas
just the point of me looking at my potna jay
laying there with a plastic shield
man that really hurt and still do
i ain't never thought i would see
jay in no friggin' casket
he could flip and dance and rap
and chunk'em with whomever
but i miss my ninja
and beat —
this ain't no turf call
rest in peace jay jay
and greedy and enenstein dawkins

-Lil' Davon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When anyone your age dies, it's straight tragedy. And we agree that it's no turf call when you grieve. RIP Jay Jay.

Almost On The Outs

Damn, I am almost back on the outs. Five more months ain't nothing to knock out. So why do I sit and stress in my cell? Maybe because I am losing thousands in clientele or is it because I love this life? Getting told when to take a head call at night... Hell nah, that ain't the life for me because I rather get out to the streets. Will I change?

I will see if a man can stand up to a gauge or will I go back to stealing cars? Testing my limits running from police behind stars. Or will I go back to hitting house licks because coming up on money is always an easy fix? Not a fix to my pockets, like a car and a mechanic but I pray to God — He will help me change before I get blasted again, but this time in my brain. So God, when I pray — please hear me out. Come to my heart because I am almost on the outs.

-Castor, 150 Crew

From The Beat: God is always there for you — you just have to call out to Him and embrace Him. "God helps those who help themselves" — an old saying. How can you help yourself to become stronger than the game? How can you learn another way to make money? Good luck.

So God, when I pray — please hear me out. Come to my heart because I am almost on the outs.

Change, and Avoid Prison

mad flows just come handwritten
i smell free of the county clothes
then throw bows
in different ways like i'm san quentin
yeah dude death come possible
life hard to throw inmates logical
ready for bail but overcame by the obstacles
friends might stab you in the back man
and gut you quick
tried to wait
i isolate
from the crowd
like the knife that i cut you wit'
prison gangs turn into strong armies
four-one-five's bee-gee-ef's and two-two-three's
they gon' turn homey
always thinkin' somebody gonna harm me
'cause on the yard they hard
tower guards don't even warn warnin's
i informed ya so when you deal through
bullets like a lightnin' bolt strikin' colts gon'
kill you
life is power you got it twisted
throw lyrics at you purposely to find out
man you spot missed it
i take risks and climb through
realize in front of ya eyes
chances stay right behind you
think about it you don't want prison
behind walls is struggle and hustle
for wrong-made decisions

-Troy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your lyrics come hard as the cold spirits behind bars that take the shapes of shanks, organize into armies pulling ranks over the newest fishes in their tanks. Your lyrics come hard as they need to be, trying to get a youngster to look and see, where he's headed in reality, if he doesn't change from what he used to be — a fool chasing trouble in the street, tricked out by a game of glitter and greed, momentary fame and sudden defeat. Then one last chance to awake before heartbreak and the prisoner's fate you outline above. Troy, thanks for showing love.

Jus' to Say I Love You

all this pain i'm goin' thru
only makes me think about siblings
and my one and only boo
i done did my wrongs wit'chu
and still you make it seem like everything's coo'
but when i was out i acted like a fool
you're by my side thru thick an' thin
i'm knowin' you're faithful
not messin' around with other men
we went out for a year an' a half
but we was only together seven months
i was usually incarcerated
you still stayed by my side
even tho' you hated it
there isn't another female like you
writin' me four-page letters front an' back
jus' to say — i love you

-Young Sick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have been blessed with a love that passes all the tests you list above. But she deserves better than to lose you to incarceration because you're unwilling to make changes in what you do! Why not try while she's still by your side?

I Had a Girl

man i had a girl
who would buy me shoes
and she always knew what to do
so i had to test to see if she
was just playing with me
i always tried to make her confess
but at the same time
i loved her and knew she was the best
so i said come on you going with me
and she said i have to follow my dreams
now her dream was to see t v
but not to come be with me
so i said it's better for me to let it go
now i know she broke my heart
it's been a long-time thing
that we done been fell apart
but that's okay
'cause i'm gon' get her back one day
she gon' see me on t v
probably running track
now i confess it's a fact
i love you —
i still love you

-Lil' Pooh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've learned a hard lesson. Love is a straight blessing, and reality is hard enough on love without bringing any extra testing. You don't have to be on t v though, just be willing to share her pleasures and joys. And does she even know you can write poems?!

Tomorrow Ain't Promised

Well, sometimes I say to myself, "Why did God put me here in this world? Just to suffer?" I ask God for his forgiveness, to forgive all of my sins from the past, the present, and the future.

Well, I'm just living to die and dying to live, so, what is the point? Why can't I just be with God in heaven? Why do I have to be in hell on Earth, stressin' myself out, just thinking about what's going to happen in the future. Is the world going to end when I'm just wasting my life in jail, or is the world just going to go on forever, and get worse and worse?

Well, God will decide if it's going to end or not. Well, it's the end of the world everyday because someone is losing their life every couple of seconds. That's the end of the world for a person that wants to live their lives, but I just don't know why life is like that? Do you?

I just want to say it's never too late to start believing in God, but just don't wait because — tomorrow ain't promised.

-Lil' Augie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's one way to look at it. Or you could say, "today is the first day of the rest of your life." Since tomorrow ain't promised, can you start changing your ways today so that your tomorrow isn't ugly? How can God help you turn your tragedy into triumph? How can you make sure your future isn't filled with prison bars and eternal scars?

**Why did God put me
here in this world?
Just to suffer?**

Thoughts

Hey, what's up? Today's subject is desperate. I'm kina feeling desperate because I've been in here for like a few months already, and it makes me look, and feel, bad every time my Latina queen, (mom), comes and sees her son in a place like this, and it makes me look bad while my girl Brenda is writing me, and not spending quality time with my loved ones, and the homeboys.

Well, I ain't really tripping off the homeboys because I know they are doing their own thing while I am serving my time up in this place, but I'm just in a hurry to go to Camp Sweeney, do my programs up there, and get my weekend pass so that I can see my mom, brothers, and my girl that's 'bout to have my baby, but that's if she still wants to keep it or not, but I hope she makes the right choice, but I hope she will keep it, but that's up to the both of us to see what we're are finna do.

If we do have it, and if she's not playing with me, but I'll find out soon, so just to get to the point, well, I hope and pray to God that they can hurry up with my papers for Camp. I know in the Bible "time is a virtue," but I just want to hurry up and start my new future 'cause I am tired of coming back to Juvenile Hall over stupid stuff, but that's what I chose, but I am a changed person now, so I'm out now, so be safe and stay cool. I am out.

-Culero, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We also hope that the two of you make the right decision. The last thing the baby need is for you to plant a seed and not water it. You sound like you got a good head on your shoulders and we hope that your baby will be your inspiration to straighten up your life. If your girl keeps the child, what is the number one lesson that you want to teach him/her? If anything you better be there for your child and not push the responsibility on others. You are the dad!

Being Locked Up

I'm locked up. It's crazy up in here. I did a stupid crime and these days, you do a stupid crime and they take it serious. For instance: I did attempt a robbery and they sent me to CYA for 12-18 months. I didn't have no gun or anything.

I know that what I did was wrong. It's my fault. It was my cousin, this female, and me. They snitched on me, but it's cool, though. One day I'll get out and change my ways.

The reason why I hate being locked up, they tell you what to do. They tell you when you can use the restroom and the phone. The reason why it's crazy to be locked up is you can't be home with your family and loved ones. It's crazy because the way the system is. You got a small room. They don't help you with your problems. They give you food and God knows what they did to it. It's so crazy.

Your mattress is on top of a brick. All I got is one thing to say: may God be with us all. That's it.

-Danny Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice writing. How do you deal with your problems when there is no one to help you? We hope that God can play a big role in your life and be your disciplinarian so that you don't continue to do bad shhh. Has this experience taught you to stop playing with fire? We hope so 'cause ya never know when you'll get burned.

Once More, Just a Little Note

why it hurts so bad
'cause the same things
that can make me smile
can make me sad
living life so mad
so i lash out and rob a cab
just another statistic
that got used to being
incarcerated —
underestimated
so this is dedicated
to the ones that was hurt
the ones that been
shooked up an' taken
the ones that be delivered
in a black hearse
the ones that emerge
and try to surge
across the world
and they hold a whole
different destination
so y'all hurtin'
hold y'all station
they treat us kids
like immigration
so these murders
are sweeping up the nation
trying to save my life
is my main occupation

-Baby Face, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can best save your life by making sure you change your life. No longer allow that madness to take you out. And don't let your sadness turn your out. 'Cause you know the most victimized crime, just might be all these young criminals in here doing time. Thanks for your compassionate rhymes!

They Want

They want to book me to the "Y" doing twelve
Right now, the judge can go straight to hell
Now I got to eat noodles and beef jerky
They're talking about it's good for you
Whatever trick, you work me
I'll do twelve and touch down in the streets
I know you hate it I'm getting my shhh situated; ain't
no violation for me
When my parole officer comes
All he says is "hi" and "goodbye"
I'm burn rubber and leave smoke right in his eyes
The "Y" ain't nothing but a bump in the road
They ain't 'bout to send me back for something that
I ain't stole
The "Y" ain't nothing but college
I did the crime, so I'ma do the time
And leave free knowledge.

-J, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What can you do to make the best of your time in the Y? How can you make it so that your time is productive? This is a big bump in the road for you and we hope that you have learned to choose every turn and exit carefully 'cause you never know when you'll hit a dead end!

The Same Thing

I wish I was never in here because I thought that I was through after I did the 90-day program in YA. I got out and was spooked to go back to doing the same thing. I stayed away from the block, but eventually, if that's all you know, then that's what you're going to do because that's all your good at.

Well, that's what you tell yourself because you're scared to discover something new, or just scared of being successful in life, or maybe you just don't want nobody to call you a square. But to me, I would not care what somebody thinks about me now. I wish when I was younger. If I would have thought like that, I would have been successful in life.

But thanks for letting me express myself, keep your head up. One.

-Lil' Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, as the old saying goes — it's never too late until it's too late. You still have a chance to be successful in life and you can learn new things. You learned to tie your shoe — so you can learn to get a job and earn your money legit. Ya feel us?

What I Wish For...

Well, here are a few things that I wish for. I wish for when I got to court, on July 29th, that the judge will just give me one more chance and send me to Camp so I can go home on the weekends so I can be more closer to them, and also so I can be there for a lot of my daughter's first things because the one thing that I would really like is to be there for her first birthday. But I know that I can't be there because her birthday is on the same day as my next court day, so I really wish for my next court date that the judge will let me go to Camp so I can be there on Christmas because my daughter and our future mean the world to me.

Also, what I wish for is that I can be out for the rest of the holidays so I can be with my family for the rest of my life, outside of these walls because this is not the way I want to spend my life.

I also wish that they don't send me to CYA, so I can see my daughters a lot more, and be closer to all of my family. So, these are just some of the things that I wish for, but one of the main things is that I get sent to Camp, and spend the rest of my life with my daughter and future wife.

Well, I have to go, so I would like to say I love you Maressa and Gabriella. Bye.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your piece really touched our hearts. We can tell you are/will be a great father and husband in the future. What kind of lessons do you want to teach your child? How can you make the best of your time at Camp or where ever they send you? Do you plan on taking parenting classes? Utilize the resources at your placement so that you can have some skills under your belt when you are released.

Smile

The thing that makes me smile is a lot of things but mostly is to see a smile on mom's and my families' face when they smile and when they are all getting along enjoying themselves. That puts a big smile on my face because I could care less what everyone outside is doing but when I see my family smiling — I love the feeling of it.

Them smiling lights up my heart and keeps me humble and happy. Also the thing that makes me smile is when I give something to someone and the never got it before. It makes me feel good and warm inside because to see someone smile makes me smile. I can't smile if no one is smiling with me or around me.

-Rifa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel you to the fullest on that one. Does your family get together on the holidays? Do you all take photos together to capture those happy moments? How can you make more happy memories together?

It Hurt So Bad

it hurt so bad
when you do stuff
you ain't got no business
it hurt so bad
when you get in jail
it hurt so bad
it hurt so bad
when you in your cell
looking at the walls
it hurt so bad
when you can only
think about getting out
it hurt so bad
when all you can
think of is your family
it hurt so bad
it hurt so bad
when you think of all
the bad things you did
it hurt so bad
when you think you're
getting out but don't
it hurt so bad
when you know
you do wrong
it hurt so bad
it hurt so bad
when your parents
see you in this predicament
it hurt so bad
when you can't sleep
it hurt so bad
when you're sorry
and they don't believe you
it hurt so bad

-Shawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem really makes us feel the pain of your remorse for where you are and what you did, and the pain of separation from those you love that want to be with. You'll be with them again, and when you are — do right, young friend.

Lil' O' Lady

you was there when i was broke down to the ground
no money to even buy a frown
nowhere to sleep —
yo' house the late-night creep
you already knew to save me something to eat
got me what i wanted
birthday two-hundred-dollar leather coat
gave the love no other female could ever give
you the only one i would think about having my kid
we would hit licks when my closest ninjas was scared
you was a rida-chick even if it meant the electric chair
you was neva scared till i grew
and started getting paper and forgot about you
thought of you as a hater let the c-notes change me
forgetting about my lil' o' lady
the one who was down
flip a scraper and started riding wit' these clowns
now it hurt to see you doing yo' thang
when i got older i wanted you to wear my rang
now it's over —
heart is dry like when you sober
but i'll tell you this —
i'll never let the money change me
especially when it comes to my lil' o' lady
now i want you back 'cause my dollas on slack
while i do this time i'll think of how to pay you back

-Pierre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know we respect your ability to rhyme, have your thoughts roll down the page punctuating time. But now, we have to say, it's not just because you were rolling with clowns that you ended up this way, taking a fall and getting locked up in the Hall. You need to step away from hitting licks and all the other scandalous tricks that stick to you like karma on glue. And we hope your lady friend doesn't ride out on missions with you, or she may come up missing, too. Get a job that's legit when you're back on the outs, put your money in bank and think about how nobody's going to take it 'cause you were the one to legally make it. Then if this is the lady you want to share your life with, and she's willing to back your going legit — it's all good.

I Have Sympathy

i have sympathy and compassion
for my loved ones because
we all are going through it
and we all feel each other
i have sympathy for people
that's in group homes
and have nowhere to go
and just runnin' from their problems
i have sympathy for homeless people
because they just sittin' out there
in the cold and have nowhere to go
i have sympathy for myself
because i never went through
what i am going through now
all i need is a hug
and for someone to tell me
that it's going to be okay

-Trenell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know your whole family's going through it for a fact, 'cause you told us that's why you had to come back. And even though you were ready to live alone; as a minor, you can't be out on your own. That's scary stuff! But we see you as a survivor who knows she's had enough trouble in her life. Everything will be all right. Don't trip. Do the next right thing, then the next — and don't quit! Learn to be your own best friend, and you will be blessed in the end.

I Don't Care

Yes, I've heard people say I don't care. I think people don't care because others don't respect them. Nowadays people are so sexist or prejudiced or racist. They don't care how fat, gay, ugly or retarded (as they call them) people feel.

I actually thought about committing suicide because of the way people make me feel. I don't think it's out of pure frustration. I think there are so many emotions in one person that they don't want to keep them inside, so they just give up. That's what I thought about doing.

There is very little I truly care about. About 50% of them are my dad. As you all should know, I don't have much respect for my mom because of what she does (sits on her butt and watches satellite TV). I could very much see myself caring more about her. I'm closing out.

-Pete, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We're happy you didn't give up. It's sad that people are disrespectful to each other. Is there something non-haters can do to stop the hatin'? To not do anything doesn't seem good enough, but what are good ways to confront haters without escalating the situation? We hope you and your mom can get past your issues and build a better relationship. What would it take from your mom and from you to start caring more for her? Can you still give her respect and love even if she watches TV all day?

Hitting Rock Bottom

I have been locked up for about a month now. This last time, being locked up has shown me a lot.

I was gangbanging and living by the streets. I was selling rocks on Smalley, and breaking fools for their money. I was getting deep into the game. And I was really liking it. I thought everything was going just right.

I mean, I was ballin'! I'm fifteen. I had my own apartment, my own legit ride, and all the fetti I needed and the ice! I thought I was doing things — then I hit rock bottom!

One of my close homegirls went to the hospital with spinal meningitis. They said she had about a week to live! I was stressing really bad. That's just the beginning.

I had a homie-family, little get-together — and some heat popped off the block. I got caught up in a crossfire! And a bullet missed me by about two inches. I was trippin'!

About three days later, my apartment got raided. The five-oh took me in. I have been up in the Hall ever since. I found out later that Task Force ran through all the homies' spots, and most of them is locked up and on their way to the pen'.

I am thankful that I am locked up, 'cause I feel that if I wasn't here — I would either be dead or in the Y. All this has made me think. I am ready to change my life. I am going to rehab. When I get out, I am taking my GED and going to school to be a RN (registered nurse).

I'm through with the game! I also found out my homegirl, Red, did pass away about three days after being in the hospital. RIP Red Mama.

-Baby Gurl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every week you've been coming with the real on a level high above your old playing field. From the moment you got clean, it seemed as if you knew that you were ready to be through with the past. Yet each week you fill in another piece of the picture, and this week we see why you found that life so attractive — your own apartment, your own car, all at the age of fifteen! But you were blind to the price to be paid. Now you know that you were lucky to come out alive and even lucky to be put in the Hall before the whole "house of cards" took a fall. Your writing is an inspiration! Do your rehab and pursue your aspirations! You'll get back all you lost plus lots, by pursuing a safe and stable vocation. Did you know there's a shortage of nurses across the nation? You'll have a job waiting!

Don't Do Nothin' You Don't Want To Feel

I had a baby girl. She was my world. We were together for the longest time. I've broken her heart so many times, although all those times she always took me back.

The advice that I got to give is don't do nothing that you don't want to feel; because when she broke mine, I felt that my heart was shattered in a million pieces. I drowned my sorrows in drugs, but that didn't do nothing but take the pain away for a moment. I'm still with her 'til this day. I got back with her, but it has never been the same. My heart is still broken, and needs to be mended.

-Lil' E, Marin

From The Beat: Nice writing — clear and honest. We can really feel what you're going through. Is your baby girl's heart still broken by you, too? How can you learn to trust each other again? Now that you know your emotions toward her are genuine, and hers for you are, too, can the trust between you can build slowly again? Good luck!

I Am

I am shy and sad
I wander the streets
I hear words
I want to trust
I am Daniel

I pretend no more
I feel pain
I touch scars

I worry about my family
I cry when I remember sad memories
I am Daniel

I understand pain
I say nothing nice on the outs
I dream about happy and sad times
I try hard to trust again
I hope to love again
I am Daniel

-Daniel, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Wow! Sad but beautiful and honest poem. We hope you can love again, too. How do you think you can get love back in your life? Will it be a slow process? Or will it happen fast, like "bang"? Where do you learn how to love? From people? Nature? Books? Artwork? Music? Can you go to those sources and start again? Do you need to surround yourself with love to feel it again? Do you need to be alone to feel it inside of you again? Do you know where not to look for love?

One Of Those Kids

I'm one of those kids that have a problem with running. I'm not in one place for too long before I get sick of it and want to leave.

Recently, something happened to me that I never thought possible. I was raped. I took way too many drugs and wasn't able to function enough to say no. I tried. Believe me I tried, but nothing would come out of my mouth.

It was the first time I did heroin and I thought it was supposed to be the best high of my life. I was wrong. All I can say is I was desperate to be out of that situation. I have been scarred for the rest of my life because I just wanted to get away and get high.

I'm thankful to be alive and I'm glad to have the mother I have to help me with what I'm going through, which is hell. Thanks for listening.

-Bmc San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We're sorry, B. We are thankful that you mom is there for you to talk to and feel supported. It's a travesty that men disrespect and violate women in that way. Do you have any ideas on how to stop sexual assault? Is it something that could be better taught by parents? Schools? Should laws be stricter? Were you committed to quitting drugs before this all happened?

**It was the first time I
did heroin and I thought
it was supposed to be the
best high of my life.
I was wrong.**

Now That Shhh Hurts

it hurts that i'm in jail
and it feels like i'm in hell
i failed at all my dreams
and now i'm back in jail
and that hurts —
it hurts that i don't have a job
it hurts that i'm not with my loved ones
it hurts that i'm not where i want to be
it hurts 'cause it hurts —
that's why i'm hurting
'cause it's curtains
that's why i'm hurting
it hurts that i'm having a baby
at a young age
it hurts that i had a baby
at a young age
but he's with god now
that hurts —
it hurts that i fight my mom
all the time
it hurts that my sister poo-poo
is a hifey girl
it hurts that my family
don't like me now
that hurts —
it hurts that my boyfriend
is missing me
it hurts that i have to keep
going to group homes
and running
that's why i'm gon'
stay this time
i'm really gon' try now
that shhh hurts
the end

-Me-Me, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel so much pain in this poem. In a way, it's just the opposite of the one you wrote last week about not caring. You do care, deeply. And now you know if you don't try, you can't succeed. So try and try! Even if you have to stop sometimes to cry, wipe your eyes and continue to try.

It Hurts To Know

It hurts to know
That my loved ones are locked out
And I don't have the key
I can't let them in
They can't be with me
I miss them so much
My siblings' loving touch
They feel so far away
And that's what's causing my pain
My sad eyes are leaking
Leaving my face stained
With the presence of my loneliness
'Cause there's so many people I miss

-Sad Eyes, Marin

From The Beat: You're a beautiful poet. What is causing you so much pain on the outs, that you can't resist whatever brings you into Juvy? Is your life on the outs pretty much the way you want it to be? What is missing in your life that you risk your freedom and hurt your siblings by being forced to be away from them?

Open-Minded

I am open-minded
I am athletic
I wonder where I'll be in 20 years from now
I hear the voices that need to be heard
I see potential in my future
I want the world
I am Ryan

I pretend to be blind of the consequences
I feel the love of my family
I touch many hearts
I worry that my close ones' health will hurt them later
I cry when I disappoint and hurt loved ones
I am Ryan

I understand the psychology of others
I say what is on my mind, hold few thoughts to myself
I dream of success
I try to reach my goals
I hope for the best
I prepare for the worst
I am Ryan

-Ryan, San Luis Obispo

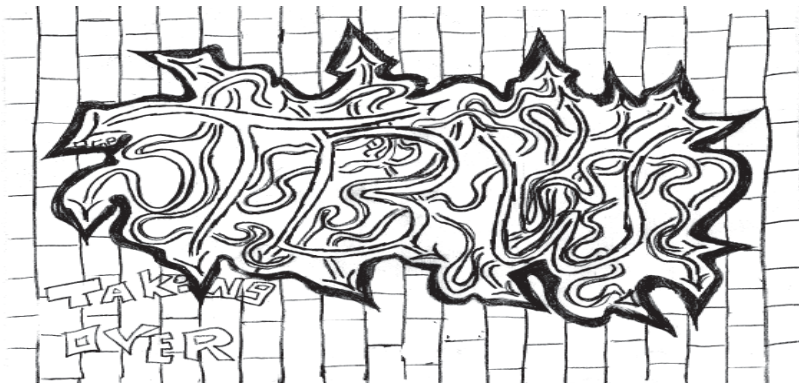
From The Beat: It sounds like you're excited about your future, which is great. Do you have dreams about what it will look like, some mental images? A poet living in Italy? A college physics professor? A husband? A father? Professional photographer? Maybe use your natural gift of listening to become a counselor or public representative in government?

It Hurts

It hurt so bad when my mom came to my boyfriend's bedroom door to take me away.
It hurt so bad when I watched tears drip down his face, as she rushed me away in her car.
It hurt even more when she told me she knew...She knew because she could see it in me, but she didn't want to admit that her lil' daughter had relapsed.
It hurt me when she looked into my eyes and said I failed my urine analysis. It hurt me so much — I got angry at her.
"You have two choices," she said to me. "You can run or come with me." And so I ran.
It hurts me more 'cause I let my boyfriend help me.
And now it hurts to know my PO put a restraining order on him.

-Amparo, Marin

From The Beat: Does this situation hurt the most because you're busted, or because your boyfriend is now in the mix? Is it on him or you that you've relapsed? You know your mother's worried about you becoming addicted. What can she do best to help you stay away from drugs? Do you want to stop using? If so, why don't you tell your mom up front, how to help you?



Drowning In My Sorrows

I'm drowning in my sorrows
 I can hardly breathe
 I don't know what I did
 To get so low, this just isn't me
 I want to get out
 All I do is sit in my cell and pout
 I gave up my freedom for a high
 That was supposed to be the time of my life
 It wasn't so great
 And now I'm doin' the time
 I can't stand my addiction, I just want to kick it to the curb
 I've finally hit rock bottom
 I'm down with drugs, now I don't want 'em
 I will stay here and think about what I did
 I know that I'm done for sure
 I'm not gonna do that shhh
 I'm not gonna smoke that dope
 When in the long run I can't deal with my roller coaster
 feelings
 I can't cope, I can't even get a hug
 Just for some stupid drug
 Well, I'm done
 I'm out

-B, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: It's great that you're committing to staying sober. Do you have a game plan for staying clean on the outs, when temptation is all around you, and Juvenile Hall is the furthest thing from your mind? How do you prepare for that situation?

Getting The Hell Out Of This Wreck

What's cracking Beat Within? This be Young Ferny aka Young Shrek getting the hell out of this wreck. About to go back to the outs and come up on some decks so I can make some money and get some honeys, drink some King Cobra 40's and feel all funny, find some honeys and jump on them like a bunny. I'm going to stop doing drugs and get my money. But for right not this is my last time writing to you guys from the in.

On Monday 26th hopefully if God thinks I'm ready to be back I am going home to my family and to my 'hood. Things are going to be different. Now I know that I got to keep it cool. If the school lets me back, I'll be going to school trying harder then I ever thought I can. I know my mom and my dad ain't going to be here much longer so I am going to spend more time with them.

I now know that I'm not only hurting myself but my mom and dad too. I miss them with all my heart. I'm never going to love nobody like I love them. I can't wait to be back home. The first thing I am going to do is go buy a burrito and later on the day I am going to get a King Cobra and just stay home until the next day, living my life a day at a time.

Hopefully Dave from The Beat Within can get me a job with The Beat Within. Make some money and start making a real life for my own good, but still in the 'hood, 'cause I love the 'hood. To all, keep a look out and keep it real. I am out.

-Shrek, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that your parents will always be important to you even when you get out of Juvenile Hall. How does the threat of knowing your parents aren't going to be around for too long have an affect on you r dad to day life? How can you mold your parents ending days into the most beautiful memories they ever had? Much love from The Beat!

So Much Pain

what hurts so bad
 is to be in so much pain
 and you can't complain
 it hurts to be in vain
 and you're going insane
 what i'd like to know is why
 you can't get over the pain
 that runs through your brain
 the pain that i feel is so strong
 it gives me the rush through my veins
 memories of the pain
 that no one can take away
 it's gonna be hard
 but i'm gonna pull myself through
 what i don't get
 is that no one can feel the pain
 but they act like they do
 but it's okay
 'cause the pain is so deep
 only god knows how i feel

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When everything you see is through a veil of pain, then even sympathy can feel a million miles away. It's true that no one feels your pain like you. But many people have been through similar pain, and they can testify that it does finally pass away. We can't feel your pain for you, but we can promise that you'll come through.

Why?

When In the Hall,
 I think, why?
 Because it hurts inside
 Why did I have to do that crime?
 Why did I not ask why?
 Because I had no fear inside
 Inside my room
 When I sit back and go deep in my mind
 I say, "Why, oh why?"
 I cannot clear my mind
 Sometimes I wish I can fly
 Up in the sky
 So, why?

-Young Drake, Marin

From The Beat: When you ask yourself why you had no fear inside when you did your crime, what answer do you come up with? Do you feel like your doing whatever you did has now ruined your life somehow? If so, can you make things better? The next time you're confronted with temptation, will you be able to resist it because you now know first hand what the consequences may be? If so, then getting busted and going to Juvy has taught you what you need to know.

**I know my mom and
 my dad ain't going
 to be here much
 longer so I am going
 to spend more time
 with them.**

Smiles

Nothing makes me smile at the moment while I'm here. I'm going through the process of "cry later" because the "smile now" — done faded away.

All my looks are mugs and grunts, because I'm in a max unit? Naw, not because of that, because this sad long time ain't gettin' to me right now, but when I do get out and see all the things I was missin' out on. The family-get-togethers, the BBQs and shhh. Friends, foes, the smell of leather, feel of chrome and silver, taste of steak, touch of female skins next to me, sound of neighborhood kids, suction tips, and five-o chasin' somebody, all the good things and feelings, everything.

I won't be long though, I won't take it for granted but I guarantee it, I'm out...

-Lil' John, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, we hope that your time in there has caused you to realize that nothing is worth risking your freedom. We also hope you can re-think your choice of the feel of chrome and silver. That shhh will wind you right back where you are right now.

Damn, Who Would Want To Kill A 15 Year Old?

What hurt me the most is when my boy got killed. I had friends that got killed before but that was my ace — we did damn near everything together from school, to crimes, to girls.

It hurt so bad I didn't know how to deal with it so I didn't talk to the people I used to 'cause somebody set him up — somebody we used to be with so I went bad on all my friends 'cause I didn't know who.

I would have loved to seek revenge but my mom talked me out of it. My friend was only 15. Somebody shot him 7 times. Damn, who would want to kill a 15 year old?

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A large population of Oakland's young people are resting in peace. Has your friend's death taught you anything or did he die in vain? How can you save yourself from a similar tragedy? What do you think makes folks go around killing each other? Why do folks hate?

Me Dio Lástima

Simon, yo tuve compasión cuando tumbabamos a unos vatos y los mandamos al hospital. Me dió lástima pero teníamos que madrearlos porque cuando ellos agarran a un homie mío, ellos no tienen lástima hacia nosotros. Y por eso nosotros hacemos lo mismo con los enemigos y tenemos que levantar nuestro barrio hasta la muerte.

From The Beat: Claro, como no te va a dar lástima si todos tenemos sentiminetos entre seres humanos aunque tengamos odio a la persona. Tienes que quitarse ese pensamiento de la cabeza, de estarse matando mutuamente. Está mal que ustedes se esten matando entre Latinos como si no fueran humanos que sienten.

When I Felt Pity

Yeah, I felt compassion when we bombed on these fools and sent them to the hospital. I felt pity, but we had to do what we did because when they see one of my homies, they show no compassion towards us. Therefore, we do the same thing to our enemies and we have to represent our 'hood until death.

-Juan, Marin

My Sympathetic Mind

I have had sympathy for a lot of people, being incarcerated has helped me feel other people's pain,

I'm going through the same thing they're going through.

I do feel sorry for a lot of people

I try to help them

Yet they don't listen to me and continue to come to this place.

I've never felt sorry for myself because I can't.

I've messed up my life

so it's time for me to straighten my life up.

I do feel sorry for homeless people

I always try to help them out anyway I can.

Some of the pieces from people in The BWO describe how hard it is for them to survive in their reality

This touches my heart,

and makes me realize how good I have it.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write a very touching piece about your strong desire to help others, while feeling their pain. We think the best service you can provide today is to work on yourself and keep writing and teaching others, because face to face they might not want your support, but when they are alone in a cell they'll feel your powerful words, like you feel the words of others in The Beat Within.

What Hurts

My dad hurt me the most. He always said he was going to do something but never did. He didn't come and hang out, not with me. He never came and got me when he said he was. Plus, I am still feeling a little sad but I have got over myself.

I also hurt my mom, my girlfriend, my aunt, my grandma, my little bro, and my friends, and I got hurt by the police, so I just want to get away from it all, yes I do, when I get out. I always wanted to get away from it all!

I want to go to college and go to the pros and play basketball and football and baseball.

I want for every one to stop the violence, and I do like to get some work when I get out of jail, but everybody want to be a cat or a lug, but I want to be a good person go to school and get a degree. I want to do something with my life! I love baseball and basketball and football and I love girls. I just want to be a good person, help me God, you have to, but I have to find the way out of here, I need to do something with my life, like go to school, get a job, or go play some ball.

I hope that I get out by the end of the summer before school start so I can go to school.

-Jonathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Jonathan, you have plenty to share, we can tell from this piece and from what you share in the workshop group conversations. We would like to help you improve your skills as a writer and speaker too. What you have to say is very important. And the dreams you have for improving yourself can be done. You are right you need to leave the environment that keeps you down. You need to get back to school. You need to play sports. You need to stay busy, and slowly leave the bullshhh life that has claimed way too many young men of color. In your next piece lets go over it together. We hate that we had to cut part of your piece 'cause we could not read your writing. OK? In your next piece can you tell us about your love for sports? Tell us about your family? We're listening.

Between You And Me

I want our love to always be a personal thing
just between you and me
There will be others who will
Think they know us better
Than we know ourselves
Who will want to offer their opinions
On the way we ought to be.
There will be times when we
Are curious or confused
And will find comfort in
Talking to a friend or spending time alone
But if ever there is a problem
Involving the two of us
I hope that we will always come
To each other first
For just as it took only the two
Of us to fall in love
The two of us can overcome
Any obstacles
That ever get in the way.

-Red Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That was a really nice piece. Why do you think that lovers sometimes need time alone? How was your relationship affected by incarceration? How hard you think it will be to overcome the obstacle of being apart for a very long period of time?

Lo Que Me Haría Feliz

Lo que me haría reír es salir libre, estar con mis homies, regresar a casa y el día que me manden a Tijuana México. No me aguito ya que voy a regresar para patiarle las nagas a esta gente. También me gustaría ver reír las caras de mis homies cuando me vean de regreso.

La neta es que si no quieren estar conmigo aquí, les aconsejo que hagan las cosas bien, no hagan cosas que no vale la pena, y háganle caso a su madrecita porque ella nos da consejos para que no caigamos en estas cosas.

Pero ni modo ahora hay que aguantar la vara.

From The Beat: esperamos que donde sea que te manden que tengas buena suerte y que disfrute de tu felicidad. Acuerdate en no enredarte con malos amigos quienes te lleven a algún lugar como este. Esperamos que muchos de estos muchachos reciban este mensaje y se pongan la pilas.

What Would Make Me Smile

What would make me smile is to be free again, be with my homies, when I go back home, and, also the day when they send me to Tijuana, Mexico. I don't let that get me down because I'm going to come back to kick all these people in the butt. Also, I would like to see the smile on my homies' faces when they see me back again.

The whole hype is that if you don't want to find yourself in here with me, I advise you to do things right, don't do things that are not worth doing, and to listen to your mothers because they are the ones that give us the kind of advice to prevent us from ending up in situations like the one we're in right now.

Anyways, it doesn't matter now because the only thing left to do is to endure the truth

-Magic, Marin

Rose

I'm like a rose
Beautiful
But I hurt
I have a lot of things crawling inside me
That are eating me up
If you touch or hold me the wrong way
I just may hurt you
I'm like a rose
I started from a seed
Grew into a bud
And is now growing into the most beautiful rose
I'm like a rose
I'm not like the other roses
I am bruised and torn
And have nowhere to go
I'm like a rose
Soon or later I'm going to grow old
And withered
Even if I never find the love I've been looking for

-Lauanda, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If we are all roses, we eventually grow thorns and wither away. But before we allow ourselves to wither away, we grow and blossom. Do you see yourself shedding your thorns? How?

Dolor Es Algo Que No Demostramos

Dolor es algo que por más valiente que seamos, siempre está ahí pero nunca lo demostramos, sea dolor de tristeza o dolor de desesperación. Estoy seguro que algunos de los que estamos aquí estamos desesperado.

Dolor es cuando deseas estar con alguien que tú quieres como a tu familia o a tu novia.

A mí no me interesa lo que está pasando en este sistema porque esto no es nada. Esto es sólo para niños.

Cuando llamo a mi jaina me siento culero porque me acuerdode los momentos en que estuve con ella, y porque no puedo estar con ella en estos momentos de mi juventud. Para mí, es el único dolor que yo siento.

Para todos los homies que estan torcido, no se aguiten homeboy, y que estren truchas y hasta al rato.

From The Beat: Nos gusta todo lo que dijistes, de verdad que nos gusto tu sinceridad de lo que es el dolor. Pero estamos un poco confuso, que quisistes decir con que este sistema no es nada, que es algo para morritos. Sabes, nosotros te aconsejamos que no te confies mucho porque el día menos pensado llegarás a terminar como los demás, que dicen que nunca le hicieron caso a las cosas de niño y se confiaron de esa frase y ahora desearian devolver para atras el tiempo para poder arreglar lo ocurrido.

Hurt Is Something We Don't Show

Pain is something that no matter how brave we may be, it's always there, but we never show it be it pain from grief or pain from being desperate. Like some of us in here, I am positive that we are desperate.

Pain is when one you long to be with someone that loves you like family or your girlfriend.

I am not interested in what is going down in this system because this is nothing, this is just for the kids.

When I call my female, I feel like a punk because I start to reminisce about the moments when I was with her, and since I can't be with her in these times of my youth, for me, that's the only kind of pain that I feel.

For all the homies that are locked up, don't get sad. This also goes out to all the homegirls. Until later.

-Droopy B4, SF/YGC

On My Block

On my block ain't too many smiles
but a lot of cries
But when yo' loved one die your stuck
with questions like why?
But as yo' life goes on, you think about the streets
And as yo' thoughts go on, your thoughts become weak
But on my block fools die on a daily
As life goes on you begin to think the 'hood is shady
But now I'm locked up missin' everything
from my family to my baby
But I'm knowing the year of "04" is going shady
But this life ain't promised — it's always a maybe
RIP Ray Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Does each and every person on your block fear death? Are there any law abiding citizens in your 'hood? Do you always wanna live in a place that's so shady? Why or why not?

I'm knowing the year of "04" is going shady

Mi Carnalito

(Este rap es dedicado a mi carnalito quien está con Diosito)

Esta va para mi carnalito
Que triste me dejo cuando el murió
Él ya tenía unos meses de edad
Cuando Dios se lo llevó
Todavía no hablaba
Pero en su pensamientos
Le dijo a mi jefita,
"Adios madre, que vida no,
No llores madre linda
Porque eso a mi me duele"
Tamb ién le dijo a mi jefita
"Cuida a mis carnalita"
También a mi jefecita cuida
A mi único carnal que Dios te va a dejar."
I'm carnalito, tú sabes que
Me aguito porque te fuístes brother.
Yo aquí te necesito
Estoy aquí torcido
Y no sé cuando salga
Por no seguir las reglas
Que decía mi jefita
Tú que estas en el cielo
Tú con mi carnalitas
Cuidalas bien carnal, no las dejes solitas.
Cuida a mi familia
No te aguitas carnal, cuidanos desde arriba
que nada salga mal.
Metiendome en problemas ando,
Esto se va a acabar
Lo voy a hacer por ti
Ayúdame carnal
Yo quiero vivir toda la vida
No quiero seguir en el desmadre de la vida.
Los traigo en mi mente
Aquí en mi corazón
Aunque esten en el cielo
No los voy a olvidar
Algún día voy a olvidar
Algún día voy para viva.
Esperame carnal.

From The Beat: Que cansión tan linda, aunque este no llegue a ser el mejor de los pedazos en el Beat, para nosotros los Latinos, tu hermanitos, y tu hermanos, lo será. Este pedacito es algo muy sincero, muy de adentro. Sabes que hermano, todo se puede en esta vida, estamos seguro que saliendo de aquí, vas a llegar a ser un gran hombre, un hombre de buenos sentimientos, buenos principios. Sabes, esto de andar en pandilla es sólo un pasatiempo, una prueba que ya pasastes. Si ya pasastes por mucho es hora que te des cuenta que esto no sirve. Que

hay mejores cosas que tienes que ponerle mente, no te dejes derrumbar, alivianate, y cuidate amigo y te queremos darte las gracias por ser parte de nuestra arte de hobra. Tienes muchos talentos y muchas ganas de cambiar, por eso te aconsejamos que lo uses.

My Brother

(This rap is dedicated to my little brother who is with God right now)

This goes out to my little brother
He left me very sad when he died
He was already a few months old
When God took him
He still didn't talk
But in his thoughts
He told his mother
"Goodbye, mother. What a life, isn't it?
Don't cry beautiful mother
Because it hurts me to see you cry."
And also said,
"Take care of my sister.
Also, my mother, take care of
My little brother that God is going to leave you with"
Brother, you know that
I get sad because you left, brother.
I need you here
I'm here, locked up
And I don't know when I am going to get out
All because I did not follow the rules
That my mother set
You, who are in heaven,
You're with my little brothers
Take real good care of them, don't leave them by Themselves
Take care of my family
Don't get sad, brother
Watch over them from up above to make sure nothing Bad
happens to them
I'm just getting myself into trouble
That is going to change though
I'm going to do it for you
Help me, brother
I want to live my whole life
I do not want to continue living in the mess of life
I carry you in my mind
And also in my heart
Even though you are in heaven
I'm not going to forget about you
Someday I will
Someday I am going up to heaven
Wait for me, brother.

-Juan, Marin

If I Die Tonight

Listen, my choices got me
 In a bad position
 Caught up in the system
 Every night I'm wishing
 And praying to a God
 That's not visible
 My life seems miserable
 Sometimes I want to let go,
 Then I hear my family's voices
 Think about my choices
 And the life I chose
 The drugs I abuse
 The family I lose
 When I'm incarcerated
 But if I was out I'd
 Be getting faded
 So am I living wrong or right?
 This life got me thinking,
 What if I die tonight?

-Jeremy, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: What if you were to die tonight? Could you say you were happy with your life? Could you say you did what was right? Would you have been able to do everything you liked? That was a great poem and we think you have major skills. So keep jotting down your ideas and while you're at it you can keep keepin' it real.

Lyrics Of Fire

(In response to the reign of lyrics.)

Lyrics are like flames
 burstin' off this piece of paper
 into your brains
 Running like blood
 through your veins
 I'm the one who reigns
 like the storm in Florida
 After I'm done wit'
 a supposed lyricist, call the coroner
 tell him to collect the body
 it ain't my fault he heard the lyrics
 and had a heart attack like John
 Gotti
 This ain't a hobby,
 It's a job
 and I'm making you retire
 Read this peace of paper
 and you'll know I have lyrics of fire.

-Jeremy, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We see that you possess some heat. And your mouth speaks about what you've experienced in the streets. But how can you use this to benefit in life? Have you ever thought about what you're going to do when you're released? You never know, somebody might pay you to write. Keep coming with that fire. Your lyrics are words that we like.

What Are You Going To Do?

When I get out I will stop stealing cars, 'cause I want to have a good future with my lady.

I'm about to work and do my best, and stop kick it with my bad influences. I want to do something useful in life. I want that my family be proud of me. I don't like to see my family sad. That's why I'm getting out of trouble only for my family and my lady and stop doing bad drugs, that's on mommas.

Keep your head up, you know how we do it.

-Guero, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good for you! You know what is important to you. It takes a strong man to follow through with these decisions. Do you think it will be tough? What will be some of the obstacles? Are you ready to face them? Make us all proud. We know you can do it. Be strong! And always keep your head up!

Lyrics are like flames burstin' off this piece of paper

Tener A Mis Padres Conmigo Me Hace Reir

Lo que me hace reir es que todos los días tengo a mis padres y también me hace sentir mejor. Yo siento compasión por mis padres porque ya están viejitos y todo el tiempo que estuve con ella, en mi país, no pude ayudarlos como yo quería ayudarlos. Para mí lo más sagrado que tengo son mis padres porque sin ellos no sería nadie.

Ahora por no haber seguido sus consejos me encuentro en la cárcel. Yo le doy gracias a Dios, porque él me ha escuchado y me ha abierto los ojos, y me ha enseñado a ser alguien en esta vida.

Gracias a él dejé la droga y ojalá y cuando regrese a México y no me reprochen mis queridos viejitos. Espero que no sea tarde para ganarme la confianza que les he perdido.

Si algún día Dios me da vida y licencia regresaré a este país con la frente en alto para seguir por el camino que me encontraba. Les pido a todos lo que lean estas pocas letras que le hagan caso a sus padres, que es lo más sagrado que tenemos en esta vida.

From The Beat: Que bien nos da saber que les tienes gratitude a las personas que te dieron la vida. Sabes, en la palabra de Dios, dice que aquel que adora a sus padre se le alarga la vida. Creemos que los padres son las personas que más perdonan a sus hijos, y creemos que si le tomas mucha fuerza de voluntad para que te perdonen, ellos te perdonarán. Eso tenlo por seguro, que si haces un esfuerzo lograras conseguir ese perdón que quieres. No te dejes vencer amigo, todo en esta vida se vale. Si luchas se consigues, pero te aconsejamos que una vez que tengas esa confianza de vuelta, que no la vuelvas a perder porque sería otra desolación más.

Having My Parents With Me Makes Me Smile

What makes me smile is to know that my parents are alive, that also makes me feel good. All I need to do is remind myself of this every day, and it brings a smile to my face, and it also makes me feel better.

I feel compassion for my parents because they are old and the whole time that I was with them in my country, I couldn't help them the way that I would have liked to. For me, the most sacred thing that I have are my parents, because without them, I would be nothing.

Now, for not having listened to their advice, I find myself in prison. I give thanks to God because he has listened to me, has opened my eyes and has shown me to be someone in this life. Thanks to Him, I left drugs, and hopefully when I return to Mexico, my parents will not turn their backs on me. I hope that it is not too late to win over their trust, which I have lost.

If God grants me the opportunity to return to this country in my lifetime, I will come back with my head up high to get back to the good road I was on. I ask for everyone that just so happens to read these few letters to obey their parents, because they are the most sacred things that we will ever have in this life.

-Cadrito, San Mateo

It Hurts So Bad

It hurts so bad to think about my mom walking out on me.
It hurts so bad to know that I got to live with all males and
no females.

It hurts so bad to know I got to go through this everyday.
It hurts so bad to know that I can't see my son and loved
ones when I want to.

It hurts so bad to think that my son is growing up like I did
with no father.

It hurts so bad to know my son's mom is in jail.

It hurts so bad to know that she is the only female that I
love.

It hurts so bad to know that she is having another baby
while she is in jail.

It hurts so bad to know that my mom want me to move in
with her.

It hurts so bad that my dad is getting out and I don't even
know him and I want to get to know him.

I hurt so bad.

I hurts so bad, so bad.

-Taze, 150 Crew

From The Beat: One sure thing in life is that no matter how bad it hurts, it will get better. Life gets hard sometimes. It really hurts. We have regrets, family problems, love problems, etc. There are some things that we can do nothing about. Just know that times will get better. Not everything hurts. What in your life feels good? Who do you love? Who loves you? What was the last joke you heard? Ever laugh so hard your eyes tear up?

As I Sit

As I sit in my cell,
Many things go through my brain,
Knowing I got another two months
I feel I'm going insane
I look back at all the stupid things I did
To make time go by

I realize how much I miss my girl
But I can't cry

I have to be a man
I realize that I was acting like a child
Going out, getting blown,
Getting buck wild

And now I need to be a man
And pay my fines that are piled.

I have a job when I get out
And I'll be working for a while.

-Kevin, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Good for you. We're glad you have a job waiting for you when you get out. The biggest problem for people getting out is finding a job. So you've already won half of the battle. The other half is staying out so you can work. Do you think that will be a problem for you? Why or why not? Hopefully a job will help you make it out here.

I Don't Care

I'm not worried about nothin'! They pump no fear in my heart 'cause I've been through enough bad times to where I can lend them a couple and you.

Sometimes I don't care and I feel like givin' up. It's things in my head and body that won't escape me, lost souls, and demons. Feel me? I'm a kid wit' a kid and through my eyes all I can get and do is what they let me do, like my OG patna told us. "They lettin' y'all get money the best way they let street ninjas get and that's the streets." I don't care too much about nobody 'cause I got a daughter to take care of. They look at me like a menace when I was doin' what I had to.

Some people predict me to lose but I won't give up. They think all I know is the streets and that's mostly what I do know but I gotta lil' book smarts. Why should I care what he or she care? I'm myself so I don't care! It's time to change. I came back from nothin'. I lost patnas, I've seen patnas get lost and never could find themselves.

I don't care what you think of me. I'm just a street kid from Oakland tryin' to live and I don't care! RIP Anty Bo.

-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you don't care, then no one else will either. You must love yourself 'cause if you can't do that you will feel some serious suffering in your life. They say if you don't love yourself then you can't love anyone else. Can you find yourself or will you keep feeling this sense of pity for yourself? Help yourself. If you ain't trying to help yourself then sorry cousin — there's not much anyone else can do for you. Solid writing to say the least. Wow!

The Freedom Smile

When I wake up in the morning
to the smell of pancakes, eggs, and bacon.
Knowing I have the freedom to come and go
as I please.

I smile when I have security within my family and
relationships.

I smile when I do right in the community.

-Cory, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Mmmm, delicious. That makes us smile too. Food, freedom, and family. The sweetest things in life.

Freedom Makes Me Smile

The thing that makes me smile is freedom. The reason freedom makes me smile is because I can do what I like to do instead of what somebody I don't know tell me to do.

Also I can be with my family and my excess amount of girlfriends. Then I can go to regular school, see regular, eat regular food, wear regular, associate with regular people and don't have to go to court.

What else makes me smile is being able to go to the corner store and buy what I want instead of one thing. And lastly what makes me smile is living with people where the time is moving, instead of keeping still by being in jail where the time stays still. So that's what makes me smile.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well if everything that makes you smile is out there in the free world, why did you put it at risk? Also, what are you doing with an excess amount of girlfriends? Remember, you can't have the cake and eat it too. You just might wind up alone or with an excess amount of warts!

**I don't care what you
think of me. I'm just a
street kid from Oakland
tryin' to live
and I don't care!**

My Mother in Pain

My mom is one of the most powerful persons in my life. Unfortunately, I have caused my mom a lot of pain emotionally.

Now at this point I'm serving time in juvenile hall for my wrong doings and pain causing actions. If I could defeat logic I would turn back the hands of time and make a lot of changes. Now I'm stuck in the present and must look forward to making a difference in the future and find peace with my mom and the rest of my family. Maybe by coping with my drug addiction and my anger issues.

So I leave this excerpt with the following apologies:

Sorry for breaking your heart!

Sorry for ripping the family apart.

Sorry for doing drugs behind your back.

Sorry for not going to school and picking up the slack.

Sorry for not being brave and being a leader.

Most of all sorry for not being your son!

-D-Minus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: D-Minus, you are a smart guy. You really sound like you've learned a lot from your experiences. We believe that you are sincere in your apologies. Hopefully, your mom can see it too. If you have a drug addiction and anger issues, the best way is to get help. You are a strong individual, but sometimes the strongest moves we can make are to ask for help. We know you can change; you CAN make a difference in your future. Be strong!

Wishing For A Better Future

I wish I were at college getting an education
learning what I need to know to attend graduation

I wish I were practicing football

improving my skills so that I don't fall

I wish I still had my scholarship to Hawaii

then everyone would want to get to know me

I wish I were the bigger man the night of the crime

but now I'm doing some serious time

I wish I could've walked away

but my pride came into play

I wish I could've listened to God's warnings

Instead, I turned my back and stopped listening

I wish I could change what I've already done

because being locked up ain't no fun

I wish I were with my family at this time

but right now I'm getting mine

I wish I were with all the ones I love

but God is sending me messages from above

I wish I were with the love of my life;

My fiancé, who will soon be my wife.

-Alfred, San Mateo

From The Beat: Some of these wishes are about things you cannot change (like wishing you had walked away from the situation that led you here). But most of what you wish for is within your grasp: a college education, playing football, being with your family, and making your own family. If God is sending you a message, we hope that you're listening, and that you can apply it to your life so that you'll never experience being a slave of the system again.

**I wish I were with all the ones I love
but God is sending me messages
from above**

The Streets

The streets got its own set of rules

It eat up and spit out fools

People grip tools

Bullets scatter

No one matters

It's a trip

How people slip

And fall

Y'all

Just want to ball

But ain't willing to pay the price

These streets will take your life

With no strife

No one grieving

When you are bleeding

And leaving

Dead from the heats

Victims of the streets.

-Jeremy, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Damn, that's deep! What price have you paid? Are the streets worth getting sent to an early grave? If they constantly put us in harsh conditions, then how do they expect us to behave? Do you take your own advice? Are you really that brave? We appreciate this piece because it makes us see the streets through your eyes. Keep up the good writing you're helping us understand so we can make others realize.

Why People Hide Their True Selves

I think that people hide their true selves from other people 'cause sometimes people are fake they don't want other people see their true selves.

Other times people hide their selves 'cause they gotta keep up with the image that they made themselves look like. For example if you make yourself look like you're all hard and shhh but you really ain't — you got to live up to it now 'cause other people now think you're this one hard ninja that just don't give a shhh. But this is what I think the reason is.

-Lil' Carlos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Have you ever hidden your true self? Do you find yourself being someone you're not in the Hall? Since media has such a great influence on us all, do you think any of us are truly ourselves or are we just a product of our surroundings?

Words To The Wise

Wisdom comes from livin' — it is not given.

"I've been goin' through hard times

for the ghetto child of mine

I wonder if you have to suffer

for yo' father's crimes.

Many learned this in Juvi

I'm still blessed and still livin'

I'm tryna earn every penny

that I'm gettin'."

During the time of my life

I've been through the war of myself.

I've fought myself to live in this world.

-OJ Simpson, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What kind of war are you fighting with yourself? Does it look like you're winning the war? Do you feel like you suffer for your father's crimes? How?

What Makes You Smile?

What makes you smile?
 Eatin' food with barely any taste
 What makes you smile?
 Takin' showers in front of 19 strangers
 What makes you smile?
 Takin' a shhh in front of everybody
 What makes you smile?
 Living with murderers, rapists, and burglars
 What makes you smile?
 Staying in a lil' room all day
 What makes you smile?
 When you have to leave the section shackled up
 What makes you smile?
 Seein' your mother once a week?
 What makes you smile?
 What makes you smile?
 Shhh!
 Ask me when I get out.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your irony is hella tight! Since being in the Hall doesn't make you smile, then what changes do you need to make in your life so that you can be out in the free world smiling?

Hello Dad?

How could you deceive me?
 From the day I was born
 To choke me with your words
 Before I knew I was your sperm.
 I tried so hard to make you happy
 But you always make me cry
 And every time you left
 I felt like the pain deeper inside
 I cried so many nights
 And broke many times others thoughts I would not
 But times has gone on
 But all is not forgot
 You're waiting for me to call
 But when it rings it's never me
 I'll be eighteen shortly
 But you expect me to run for cover under your wing
 But too old now
 So you're done hurting me

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: I may, we've been following your writings for a while now. Your ups and downs have been in the pages of the Beat. You are blossoming into a strong young woman. Your life experiences may be painful, but you've really taken valuable lessons from them. We are proud of you. You're gonna be a good mama!

**Your waiting for
 me to call
 But when it rings
 its never me**

Life Is A Song

Life is a song
 Escape
 You must not stop
 You must move on
 There's a pain that hit you
 And makes you want to shout
 Just like if you in the dark
 You must move out
 Out into the light
 Whether you know wrong or right
 Time past by
 I know it might seem slow
 But when it's time to go
 You really never know
 But in this song you will not have to rhyme
 Just stop sinning and you will live better life
 Like I said
 Life is like a song
 Escape
 You must not stop
 You must move on

-Tyrisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice poem. Move on! What kind of escape are you talking about? Sinning? Sometimes we need to just escape ourselves, escape our way of thinking, in order to really think clear. What do you think?

Haters All Around Us

Why do I look around and see so many hatin' and envyin' me?
 I look for the good but I keep coming across the bad.
 As if life isn't stressful enough
 without one of these females on my back.
 I pray to God
 one day we could all come to peace
 but when I see the outside world,
 the more it worries me.
 Everybody has something to say
 or approach you with a mug on their face.
 When will people come to see that love is deep
 beneath,
 and all this agony will pass away and everybody will come together
 like it's our last days?

-Brittani, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When will people realize that? We don't know. But we do think that love IS the answer. There are haters all around, perhaps it's because they lack love. Have you ever heard someone say, "Love your enemy"? What do you think about that? Is that possible? Will it help?

Hurts So Bad

Hurts so bad, why?

Because we as people hurt ourselves and others. We hurt others for revenge and power. But as a man, I say to myself who are we if revenge is the key to a human?

It hurts so bad because these things I see, hurt so bad. There's more to life. We have to achieve things that we think we cannot achieve.

That's what hurt so bad.

-Cuttey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Cuttey, you've got a good point here. What do you think is the key to being a human? What is our purpose, the purpose of life? To achieve? What do you want to achieve in life? Nobody likes to hurt, to feel pain. What if we could eliminate pain from this world, is that possible? To repair what is broken?

A Relationship That Went Wrong!

My daddy is a stranger
My daddy is insane
My daddy is a dope fiend
That does nothing but complain

I wish he was a father
I wish he was always there
I wish he was at my birthdays,
But he never really cared

He always used to hit me
He always used to yell
He always left me bruises
And always gave me hell

He told me I was stupid
He told me I was nothing
He told me I was dumb
And called me an ugly duckling

He would call me names
He would always hurt me
He never showed his love,
But no one cared to see

He kept doing his drugs
He kept doing what he was doing
He also kept ignoring me
And now he is suing

I now am locked up
I now am away
I now am safe
In this place I stay

So, he can say what he wants
'Cause we never did have a bird,
But one day that ugly duckling
Will turn into a beautiful swan.

-Baby D, San Mateo

From The Beat: How unspeakably tragic that your relationship with your dad is so broken — you even hint that it's so bad that he's suing you. The remarkable thing is that you came through his abuse and neglect with the strength to write this piece. The swan already exists within you (the ugly duckling is just a label that you can choose to discard at any time), and it shows its beauty in this piece. How can you use this time of safety to prepare yourself for a return to the world, and the troubles, that await you?



Hurts So Bad When Sympathy Hits A Smile

Hurt so bad when it's down under
when I suffer
when it's tougher that before
Sympathy is what I want you to feel for me
empathic is so pathetic too
for you to see me in need
of what I need
Tease of freedom
a homepass
I won't come back
A lack of self-control
rolls from your thought
Some say I am blessed
but this must be a test
of my courage
of this pain
My smile is pretty to see
but it's not me to let you see
so fake too many rule
so hard life is
you never said it would end up like this
Sensitive to the fact that it's my placemat
to give or understand
when it hurt so bad
You're sav for what you done
conquest is all I have made
angry sitting in a locked room
it feels like a tomb
The walls are getting closer
more or her
is finding why it hurt so bad
when I hear your sympathy
and you ask me to smile
while it hurts so bad
And sympathy or a smile
when towel on towel fell
so dirty
cutting to see if there still blood there
But some ask who's to blame
that a shame goes to flames
rang rage when I wake
up from this dream
So when I smile you smile
then it's in the file loving myself
it's too much when too proud of how
but to get by I must abide by a smile
for the place to let me out
when I go south
So why can't I smile?
You never asked why
I can't smile
'cause a smile
for a smile
only if I
can tell what
you feel
still!

-Berry, San Mateo

From The Beat: To be honest, we're not completely sure what to make of this piece as a whole — it could be that your writing is beyond our ability to comprehend. Having said that, there are shimmering glimpses of clarity that come through, and it is clear that whatever else runs through the piece is brought together in the last few lines which answer the question about why you don't smile. Do you feel? Do you feel compelled to paste fake smiles on your face to get by? Has cutting become the only way that you can feel? It is amazing that someone as quiet as you are in workshops can open this faucet of wordplay and emotion.

Prince And Smokey's Page

Summer Time Lock Down

During this time of summer, I would be training and conditioning for football season. I most likely would be running because I was never big on lifting weights. The time I have off from running, I would probably be chilling with my sister and my girl.

My sister and me are hella close because her and me are twins. My girl is my sister's best friend, so she's close with both my sister and me.

I only go swimming about three times each summer. When I do go swimming, it's at my uncle's house. I don't really like swimming in the wild.

My family has always been a close family and we always spend Sundays together. We always go to church, and after church, we go out to eat. This summer, I was planning to go to my birthplace, St. Louis, Missouri. I have family there that I haven't seen in years. I'm not the type of person that's goes out looking for trouble because I love my family too much.

I have two little sisters and they're ten months old, and I can't ever think about leaving them. They are my little angels and I would never hurt them in any way, especially by getting hurt, or getting killed.

I always think about me being locked up as a blessing in disguise. I say this because I know I need some time to think about my actions and where I was headed in life. I thought a lot and now I'm able to see that my actions led me to where I'm at. I know now that my actions are nobody's fault but mine.

All the D-Unit staff in here at the Hall, especially Mr. Jones, are making a difference in my life by helping me out.

-Prince Charming, San Mateo

From The Beat: One things we can see from all your writing is that you took school seriously enough to learn to write well. That's important, and makes us confident that you can use the time here to your best advantage, educating yourself and using what you learn to rejoin your family and be the positive role model you (and we) know you can be. Just keep that vision of you enjoying your family, whether at home, at church or otherwise. That is what "the good life" refers to, and we see you on a path to getting there. We'd really like to know how your thinking matured to this level, because we see in your writing the difference between a child (before) and an adult (now).

Numbness

I want to feel the pain
I want to feel the cocaine
I want to feel the knife across my arm
I want to feel all my harm
I want to feel breeze
I want to feel the freeze
I want to feel this bumness
All I can feel is numbness

-Smokey, San Mateo

From The Beat: All of those 'I wants' together made a very sad poem. But if you think about it deeply, you're not numb because if you were, you wouldn't even be able to feel numb in the first place. What do you think about that? Do you think that writing about wanting to feel helps you to feel? Do you remember what it felt like before you started feeling numb?

When Angels Die

An angel of mine has fallen
God in Heaven has called him
This angel was never bad
He told me my badness was a fad
He begged me to come clean
At that time I didn't know what it means
He got really sick
He got it from a tick
Now he's gone
I've known him so long
I couldn't take the pain
So I overdosed on cocaine
Lucky I didn't die
But I learned how to cry
Even now I don't know why
Angels have to die.
RIP Michael James Dibano
1988-2004

-Smokey, San Mateo

From The Beat: We usually hear about people dying from gun shot wounds and things of that nature. So we were kind of surprised to hear that your friend died from a tick bite. But then we got to thinkin' about it, and came to the conclusion that it doesn't matter how you go, death is death. And death is never an easy thing to deal with. Have you been able to deal with it? What was the hardest thing about coming to terms with the fact that your friend is now gone? We wish you well and send our condolences.

My Unique Rose

Your body is as pretty as a fully blossomed rose
But what really looks good is your pose
Your sweet, soft touch is like one of the rose
But like the rose, you too have thorns
But I guess with that you were born
One day I will again be with you in the morn
That day will be soon, so baby, hold on
And every night, I hear your song
I'll be home soon, but these days are too long,
But I'll keep on praying that this long time goes
And one day soon, I can touch my unique rose

-Prince Charming, San Mateo

From The Beat: What a sweet, sweet love poem, PC. We hope your vision of being together with your "Unique Rose" comes true, and that the love you share will make you realize that freedom is a precious gift, not to be squandered.

**But I learned
how to cry
Even now I don't
know why
Angels have
to die.**

Gorgeous And Diamond's Page

Steps To Realizin'

I miss my mom
I miss my brothers and sisters
I miss my dad
I miss all the things I used to have.

I wish I was home
I wish I was there
I wish I could be home
to smell some fresh clean air.

I woke up this mornin'
realizin' again where I was
I just had a nice dream
but I guess that wasn't much.

I said to myself, "I gotta get outta here —
I gotta go
if I keep coming back for this
Then I hope I don't come back no more."

Back then I was stubborn and blind
I had no idea
what people had to offer inside.

I took their advice as whatever
and I didn't even want to be bothered!

Now it's all snapped to me
it finally got through to my head
that my life was miserable
'cause I didn't treasure what I had.

I realize now what I gotta do
I realize now that then
I was just a fool
I'm making changes
In my life when I get out
And that's the truth!

I love you mom
And miss you Karlette, Malissa, David, Zachary,
and Freddie
I hope you make it through here Abby
And then we can go out and eat some
homemade spaghetti!

To my homeboy Mario, be good and try to keep
yo'self outta trouble when you get out; Abby, I
love you with all my heart and that's no doubt;
Sa'adat, thank you for being there for me even
though I would sometimes shout and pout;
Baby Boy, you know I'm a write you when I get
out. To everyone else, be good, don't make same
mistakes and make them hard to find out.

-Gorgeous 1, San Mateo

From The Beat: Mmm, homemade spaghetti. Can we come over? This is a solid piece, and we applaud the new attitude you come with. How did this realization take place? What enabled you to see again, to overcome the blindness that had afflicted you? What's it going to take to make the changes you want to make when you get out? What are going to be the biggest obstacles, the biggest temptations in your way?

What Have I Done?

Look at da pain dat I have caused
Look at her wounds and her sounds are paused
I feel so bad I wish I would
Go back into time
If only I could.

I love her so much
She practically raised me
I miss her so much
Her fav' food be potatoes and gravy.

I did my mother wrong
And I feel so bad
Like I said before,
I should treasure what I have.

I'm a treat her with respect now
Because I have realized
That she's a beautiful Guatemateca queen
In my big, brown eyes.

I love you mom and I am so sorry
For the pain that I have caused
I'm gonna make it up to you and forget
All my flaws.

Gorgeous 1, San Mateo

From The Beat: We feel your sincerity in this piece — many talk about missing their moms (and they all mean it), but you've managed to individualize her by adding detail and talking about the specific way you feel. But why has it taken until now to recognize how lucky you are to have your mom by your side? What's it going to take to stay there with her on the outs? It sure will be sweet when you're able to return to be with her, maybe even making her a dish of potatoes and gravy.

Sad For Their Loss

I felt sad for hella my patnas who have ever lost someone, because I can almost feel their pain. I understand what it's like to lose someone ya' love.

I have lost a lot of loved ones and there's not a day that goes by that I don't think of them. I mean, it's always said that if you're out of sight, then you're out of mind, but that never happens to me.

-Diamond B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Once again, you show that warm heart of yours. Feeling others' pain is a quality that should make you pause when you get into funk with people. Have you ever felt the pain of your "enemies" or "rivals"? Do you ever think about what their mothers are going through when they're hurt?

My Friend Became My Brother

I hurt one of my friends before, by saying stupid stuff. It made me feel really bad to have my partna feel as if he could have just been stabbed in the heart by my words to him. I apologized and talked about the issue, and that's when I found out that he was more than a friend. He became my brother. I love you, DL.

-Diamond B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is one of those PG pieces that reminds us that you have a head on your shoulders, when you choose to use it... It is a sign of growing maturity that you were able not only to talk to your friend about what you said, but that you take responsibility for the pain you caused him by words alone. We're proud of you.

Gypsy And J-Boogie's Page

Life is Precious

Some say it's the little things that amount
Some even say it's the thoughts that count

But I say

No matter whether it's the little things

Or the thought

Everything matters

Everything on the platter

Love is something that you don't play with

It's something special

God gave you as a gift

Kind of like the way life is

It's a gift from the beginning until the end

Even though life may have its slips and slides

It's precious and should be valued until the day
you die

'Cause you don't know

Your life could end at any time

At the drop of a dime

Your family could bury you in a grave

underground

Because you wanted to play around

And not listen

Now you wishing

Standing in God's face

Asking to go to a better place

And he says you should've took life serious

Because life is not only a gift

It's a test

And that's why life is precious.

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: J-Boogie, nice writing. Life IS a gift. We should all take that seriously. What does that mean to you, to take life seriously? Is there no room for play? What does it mean to play with love? You make some strong points here, we can really feel your appreciation of life, but, tell us more. We want to know how you think. Seriously.

I Wanna . . .

There's so many things I wanna do

Some of which I won't be able to

Like leave juvenile hall when I feel like it

Or kick back in my room

And smoke a cigarette

But that don't mean I'm gonna give up my dreams

No

That just means I'm gonna push harder to succeed

And eventually the things I wanna do

Will be able to be done

Then I will start doing them

One by one

Until I'm completely finished

Which will take awhile

Because I have such a big list

Some things are hard, but a lot are easy

A lot are fun and some a little cheesy

But all are important to me in some shape,

form, or fashion

Most I need to do to fulfill a passion

Like tell someone I'll love her

For the rest of my life

Or fly in a plane for the first time

Just to see if it might be something

I could turn to like

There's others

And I hope I can accomplish them all

But first

I gotta do the most important

And that is get out of this hell-hole

Called juvenile hall

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a big list, which is good. Always strive for more in life. It's not always the destination that we love, that we appreciate. But, there is so much more, to appreciate about the process, you know, the struggle, the journey.

Thoughts of Sabrina

I sit and wish I never lost you. I lost you because of my stupidity and now I miss you most of all. I fight with myself because I lost you. Sometimes I sit and cry all night long. Just one thought of you makes me go crazy.

I hear music and it reminds me of the love I have for you. The love I have for you will never go away, I will love you for the rest of my days! My love for you is like numbers, it never stops, it keeps going on and on forever and ever. I could say that words can't express what you mean to me, but that's not true, because I got one word that says everything "LOVE".

I don't think me just saying I love you is enough, but I got something I know no one ever said to another person. It goes something like this, "as much water as there is in the ocean." I know I love you Sabrina, is there anything in the world that can beat that? I wrote this for you to know how many tears I shed for you.

This is a piece for people that truly loved someone.

- Gypsy

From The Beat: Gypsy, your love for Sabrina is so strong. Tell us, what is it about her that made you fall in love? How long were the two of you together? What makes her different from all other girls? Share with us some of your great memories with her.

Hurts

I've been hurting since I lost the girl I really loved. It's been three years since I last seen her. I have not heard from her for a long time too. I write things and do things that remind me of her. I would do anything to see her again.

I once said, "I would give up my freedom forever just to see her again." I know no one else would do that. The reason why it hurts me is because we was together for a long time. Some people say it's hard to say to someone "I love you". But I say it is not. After you loved someone so much you "can't" say it to another.

That is just some of the things that hurt me and makes me think of what I left and lost on the outs. And if I could do it all over again, I would. But I would change some things. I would not get hurt and I would not hurt the one I loved so much.

That's what I can say on that. I know some people will say I am whipped but it's not that it is just how I feel. To the Halls, I know some of y'all feel me.

-Gypsy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Gypsy, ahhh love hurts, it's true. But never fear, the heart always has room to love more. You will find love again. You may not be able to do things over with this girl. But, now you've learned a few lessons about relationships that you can take with you to the next one.

J-Boogie's Page

Dedication

This goes out to all of those who live day to day not
 knowing
 What their next move will be
 And those who don't know
 When the next time they gone eat
 For those single mothers who, for their kids,
 do all they can
 In a two bedroom apartment with four kids and no man
 This goes out to the girl getting raped and beaten by her
 father for no reason at all
 For the homeless man, with nowhere to sleep but the
 garbage can outside the mall
 For the man who can't get a job because he just served
 ten years in San Quentin
 For a felony he didn't commit
 For the family burying a four year old boy
 Because a gang shot up his block and killed him with a
 stray bullet
 For all of those who have struggles in life
 But try to make it better for the next generation
 I want to say thank you
 And give you this dedication.

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice... nice poem. Sometimes there are heroes in our world that go unnoticed. And survivors that get no medals, no recognition. Thank you J-Boogie, sincerely, The Beat.

Jail Life

Jail life makes me think
 Brings me to the brink
 Where I have no other choice
 but to put my thoughts in ink
 I've been contemplating
 Relating
 Facing incarceration
 Hoping and praying for a better situation
 Jail life ain't no game
 Everyday the same
 Just different names completing the chain
 Who's to blame?
 You?
 For going on that one-way train,
 Trying to get fortune and fame
 Slangin' on the block
 That weed and cocaine
 Jail life is complicated
 People hating and faking
 Judges and POs debating
 Determining how much of your life they wasting
 But I'm not going to be pulled into struggle and strife
 I'm gonna pull myself into the light
 That's why I write
 To help me do right
 And get out of the night
 The thing we call jail life

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Mr. Boogie, jail life makes you think? Good. You can look at your time as a time out. We know it's painful to be away from your loved ones, but it can also be a time or renewal. Right? Renew your life, renew what YOU are about, and renew your priorities. People hate and some people are fake. It's all part of the struggle. But remember, without struggle, there is no progress.

Desperate Thinking

I desperately need a lot of things
 Like a tight fit
 Some Air Force Ones
 And some bling-bling
 This jail life got me stressing
 I need a blessing
 There's no contesting
 I'm in cell with someone I don't know
 That got me not resting
 But desperately, I miss my friends and family
 And riding with my uncle Jr.
 Smoking Newport in a new green Camry
 I need my girl Rosie
 If she was here
 I'd feel cozy,
 Because she makes life lovely
 Never lonely
 And that's something I desperately need
 I feel like fiend
 As I write this my hand trembles
 Hoping that this will send a message to all
 peoples
 To detainees here and there
 To everyone else who just might care
 Don't go to jail
 Because these desperate thoughts
 Will put you through hell.

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: J-Boogie, you started this piece out, talkin' about you NEED Air-Force Ones, and bling-bling. Is that really what you need? It sounds like you started thinking a little more clearly towards the end of this piece. You know what you need; it's what we all need. Love. What do you think?

I Wish I Was . . .

I wish I was a falcon soaring in the air
 Feeling free while the wind blew through my hair
 I wish I was a whale swimming in the big blue ocean
 Feeling free while the current moved in a calming and
 peaceful motion
 I wish I was a sloth moving through the trees
 Feeling free while moving as swiftly as the gentle
 breeze
 I wish I was me
 Feeling free because I am free

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish that there were more folks out there that have your confidence. You ARE you. But who are who? You have the power to choose that. You are a smart, strong, independent guy. The decisions that you make, will determine who you are. Who are you?

**I wish I was me
 Feeling free
 because I am free**

Matt And Jaineshe's Page

What Hurts So Much

The one thing that hurts so bad right now is being locked up. It's not only hurting me, but it's also hurting my family a whole lot because I'm not out there helping my future wife take care of my daughter — you know not being able to be out there having a job to buy pampers and etc.

It just hurts hella bad not being able to just be home with the people I truly love. It just makes me feel hella sad when I see my mom, dad, sister, and my daughter leave and just knowing I can't go with them.

I just pray that when I go to court on July 29th that the judge will send me to Camp so I can be with people I truly love on the weekends. It also hurts knowing that my future wife really needs me and I can't be there right now.

Well it's about that time to put this letter to its end. So I just want to say I love you Maressa and Gabriella.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that everything works out for the best for you, your future wife, and daughter. If you are given the opportunity to go to Camp, what kind of changes would you make in your life on the outs so that your little family can live beautifully? What are some values that you want to teach your daughter?

What Makes Me Smile

What makes me smile the most is when I get to see my family — especially when I see my daughter — she just puts a really big smile on my face. But what takes that smile away is when the staff say you got five minutes. I also know that I'll see her the next visiting day but she really puts a really big smile on my face.

What also makes me smile is when I see my future wife in court. She just makes me feel real good when I see her. Well it's about that time to end this one so I love you Gabriella and Maressa.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you get out, will you be spending more time with your family? What are the best memories that you share with your family? We suggest that you get a camera so you can capture those Kodak moments?

It just makes me feel hella sad when I see my mom, dad, sister, and my daughter leave and just knowing I can't go with them.

Sympathy

I've felt sympathy for a lot of people. I feel more sympathetic for people who I can relate to.

There is this one girl whose father had past away from a heart attack. I can relate to her because my grandfather had died also, but from becoming sick from drinking too much. So I do feel for her.

-Jaineshe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Have you ever talked with this girl? Maybe if the two of you talked — y'all could let out your feelings and it just might be therapeutic.

Mom And Dad

There's not too many things that make me smile. Right now the only things that make me smile is seeing my mom and dad since I'm locked up.

When I was on the outs there were few things that made me smile like when my friend and family were laughing having a good time, that would actually make me smile because when they're happy I'm happy.

-Jaineshe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you are released, how can you work on making your family proud? How can you make up for lost time?

Hurts So Bad

A few people have hurt me, mainly girls who have used me. The way they have used me was by lying to get what they want without knowing how I feel about the situation. And when they get through with using me — my emotions do come out physically. And when it does they then realize what they did. They don't do anything to help the situation they just get what they want and leave.

When I hurt someone it is never intentionally unless they say or do something to me. I have learned to deal with my problem without anyone's help. The person I've hurt the most is my mom. I don't do it on purpose; it just happens because what other have pressured me to do. Ever since I've been locked up now — for the first time, I have learned a lot because of past. I know what I have to do now.

-Jaineshe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Broken hearts hurt for a very long time. But don't trip — one day you will find a lady that won't use you or hurt you. How can you resist the peer pressure that's bought up upon you? How can you be your own man? What is it that you know you have to do now?



Shadow's Page

My Sister

My sister isn't perfect, I know
 But she definitely ain't no hoe
 She is the equivalent to me
 My life equal to she
 She was so beautiful back in the day
 And she still is in every way
 She is 2 years younger than me
 But has been through everything
 She's been through more than me 'cause she's a girl
 People used to fake hurl
 When she came around
 But she always 'came home and found an older
 brother who loved her no matter what
 Even though I wanted to kick her in her butt
 But younger siblings are supposed to be annoying
 But times together we were enjoying
 Playing together when we had no one
 I tell you I had a lot of fun
 I still want to kick her in her butt!
 I love you coconut!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you still keep in touch with your sister? Have you ever told her how much you miss her? What is the best memory you have with your sister? Is your sister a great influence in your life still? How is she doing without you in her life?

I Bite

I bite myself to relieve stress
 so my arms are a frickin' mess
 I have no other way to relieve myself
 I like the pain
 Especially when I hit a vein
 And blood starts to flow
 I start drinkin' my blood
 'Cause I know my room will flood
 I wish I had someone to talk to even through The
 Beat, someone who feels what I do
 'Cause this place is killin' me
 And I have better places to be
 But as I sit on my bed and cry
 I ask myself why do I let this place get to me?
 To hurt me where you can never see
 So once again I ask
 Is there anyone who feels like me?

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are so many people who feel you. We feel you. We understand what it feels like to be an outcast. But trip this, as you get older — you and the people around you begin to mature and open your minds up to different things. Remember — variety is the spice of life so don't change for no one!

**Last time I was
 locked up
 She accepted my
 collect calls just
 to say sup**

What Happened?

What happened to the days when you were so high
 you thought you were in a maze?
 What happened to walkin' down the street
 and someone offers you some shrooms to eat?
 What happened to kickin' it in the grass
 fryin' balls off our ass?
 What happened to sitting in a circle
 passin' around some purple?
 Not givin' a shhh who was hittin' it
 'cause you had enough to get everyone lit.
 What happened to going to the woods
 on acid trippin' balls off all that you could?
 What happened to stayin' out all night
 eating shrooms and feelin' just right?
 I know what happened... like a bird they were flappin'.
 Away, far, far away.
 Where the hippies stay.
 In the stars.
 Eatin' candy bars.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your memory paints a portrait in your poetry. These days will always be a part of you and you will cherish these days as long as you live. We hope that these memories will be your motivation to stay out, get clean, and not get caught up again.

My Best Friend

My best friends are always there for me
 One of my best friends is Tiffany
 Last time I was locked up
 She accepted my collect calls just to say sup
 I wish I could have asked her to date me
 But my other best friend beat me
 She is the same as me
 We both have the same attitude towards life today
 And we are going into piercing together someday
 She makes me feel good being around her
 And when her boyfriend and I get together
 We get so drunk we can't stand
 We stumble down the street and fall all over the place
 My friendship with her definitely ain't a waste
 If I had to lose everyone except one
 She would be the one I keep 'cause we have so much fun
 Tiffany is definitely my best friend
 From now till the end!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes friends should remain friends 'cause if the two of you get intimate then your friendship may be ruined. Do the two of you still have a good friendship going on? How does she influence you? Is she a good influence or a bad one?

Castro Valley

I miss the old days when I felt important,
 back before I got caught up.
 When I kicked it in Castro Valley
 On the blvd at the billiards with my many friends
 As different groups but one horde
 Smoking pot, riding skateboards, going to Safeway
 stealing boxes of cough medicine.
 Passin' 'em out and sellin'.
 Taking 16 pills and smokin' a bong load.
 Leapin' around like a robo toad.
 Kickin' it in the village and gettin' kicked out by security. But we'd
 go back when he left to eat donuts.
 That guy was a real putz.
 And kickin' it skateboardin' and drinkin'.
 And we'd be there thinkin' "someone should get some more drank
 and some soda, someone pull rank!"
 I miss all my Castro Valley friends.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that being locked up has taught you that nothing is worth losing your freedom. Do your friends write you? Who in your old life still shows you love and affection? Who has been there for you through thick and thin and how do you show them appreciation? Remember, going back to your old friends, may be the wrong thing to do!

Shadow's Page

Why Me?

I hate the way you tease me
 Why can't you just let me be?
 I know you don't understand the way I am
 But why do you say those things you say
 Is it 'cause you don't like my way?
 Don't like my hair?
 Or is it the way I breathe air?
 I don't like being made fun of by you
 So please keep your bullshhh to yourself.
 I have enough; I don't need yours too.
 You assholes pushin' me to insanity.
 Makin' me want to hurt myself
 But when you say those things, you decide
 You don't care how I feel or why I cried.
 I know you don't like me and I know you can see.
 Your frickin' lies are killin' me.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They're just a bunch of haters who are trying to mess up your life. Don't let them push you. These things that happen will only make you stronger so don't let it bother you any longer!

Pitiful

Feelin' like a freak on a leash
 Feelin' like I have no release
 Every time I start to believe
 Something raped and taken from me
 Everybody's always messin' with me
 Nothing in my life is free
 Sometimes I cannot take this place
 Sometimes it's my life I can "taste"
 These lyrics by Korn, titled "Freak on a Leash"
 Explain my whole life in just these few lines.
 I think it's pitiful what pain and suffering people have
 caused me to feel this way, and to be the way I feel.
 I wish people would treat people
 the way they want to be treated.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes when people are going through hard times, they tend to get mean and their demons come out. We suggest that you stand up for yourself in a mature manner and don't let folks walk all over you.

Tears

Tear drops fall
 Up here in the Hall
 'Cause I am alone
 By myself in a room all my own
 But I can't get out
 And roam about
 'Cause there is no door knob
 On this side of my wall named Bob
 I sit in here all thru the day
 Trying to find a way
 To cope with the pain
 That is like a stain in my brain
 I wish there were some way
 For me to disappear
 Or for people to let me be here
 Without their bullshhh!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you cry — you cleanse your soul so don't be afraid to let loose of the pain through your tears. If anyone tells you a real man don't cry — they're lying 'cause all people cry. We all have emotions — that's what separates us humans from animals.

Domino Rally

You made me what I am
 So why do you make fun of the way I am?
 All your racist remarks and being so prejudice
 I can't go to the bathroom without someone makin' fun of me while I piss
 I wish you would keep our thoughts to yourself
 And I do not look like an elf!
 When you call me names and talk that shhh
 You don't know your throwing me into an emotional pit
 But you don't care, so you continue to emotionally hit
 And which one is it that's going to do it
 Make me do the wrong thing
 'Cause the pain you caused me
 It's like the domino effect
 It'll just keep happenin' till the reaper has no more to collect.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If these people are causing you to think so terribly of yourself then why don't you write up a grievance? Someone will listen to you. We're gonna keep encouraging you to be nice to these people and/or ignore them. Also, keep being yourself — that will really get to them! You're bigger than them! These fools are simply reminding you how important your freedom truly is. Keep yourself together.

I'm Trying

My life can't get no worse
 Unless I stole some old woman's purse
 But I wouldn't do that
 I'd sit at home and play with my cat
 'Cause she's so soft and lovable.
 And she is so adorable.
 Now I'm trying to make my life better.
 And get off that meth monster
 'Cause it's messin' up my life.
 I already "broke up" with my "wife".
 And she's the one that got me started.
 I've been doing better since we parted
 But I love her and can't stand being without her.
 She left me and started tellin' people I dumped her.
 But it's for the better
 I want to move away from here and get my GED.
 And get started on one day opening my own piercing
 shop, you'll see.
 When I complete those goals.
 Only one thing will make my life better and whole.
 The day I have my first kid.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Having a child cannot fill the emptiness you feel. You have to learn to love yourself despite of the little things that you cannot change. The past is where it is — it passed already so don't let it eat you up inside — 'cause it will... but only if you let it. If anything we can promise you that you will find new love. You don't have to settle for a girl who has drug issues and is taking you down with her. If you're better off without her — then stay without her.

Maybe I Will If It Don't End

I feel like I'm going insane
 But I also feel like I've never been sane.
 I have always thought life couldn't be any worse.
 But I have just found out it can.
 I'm 18 and am now a man.
 And there should be no reason to feel like I do.
 I need some advice to help me change into the man
 I legally am.
 'Cause I don't feel like a man and I don't know if I can make
 it through this life without cheating it to end sooner.
 I don't normally think like this 'cause I have so much to live
 for — but people make me think about it more and more.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All the comments or put downs or blows at your self-esteem are just a test from a higher being to see if you're strong enough to cope. Embrace love and forgiveness and you will be able to overcome these hard times. If you wanna be a man — take control of your life and change it! Yet, remember, use the Hall to help you too, seek support and aide from the social workers to the psychologist that work on site. If that doesn't work contact your lawyer.

Hampton And Augie's Page

With you

Without you M-A this shhh is crazy
 I'm dedicated to you and I want you to have my baby
 It's cool even though they want to send me to the Y
 Me and you will meet again,
 all I have to do is let time fly by
 Forever me and you will stay together
 Just tell me why you all on the leather
 I miss yo' love I miss yo' kisses I miss yo' hugs MA
 Lets fall deep into an ocean of love
 If a j-cat disrespect you I'ma hop out cock back and tell
 him hold up...!
 You a j-cat with no white-t trying to get hifey
 You must be ready to shed blood when you messing
 with my wifey
 Just to be with you I gave up my crew
 These are the reason why I'm in love with you
 Dedicated to Mega

-Hampton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the fire, the love, you have for M-A/Mega. We also understand the pain you would feel if someone started messing with your love, the love which you have sacrificed for. We believe you are smarter than that, to do something so drastic as to lose your freedom, because of jealousy. We have heard of too many stories where young and old people have hurt, even killed others due to being jealous. That means you totally cut off the relationship, by a bad choice. You lose your freedom, and you really lose any chance of having a loving relationship again too. Love is strong; keep the doors of communication open with Mega. Think first, before you act!

Smiling

I smile all the time just because I'm a goofy person and I do goofy things to make people smile. But sometimes when I'm serious I don't smile at all but sometimes when I'm serious I just can't help it but to smile when someone says something and I just smile for nothing.

Well you could call me Smiley but I prefer you call me Goofy, or Augie. I smile at every girl I see even if they're ugly or not. I smile when my family comes to see me because I'm so happy to see them. I smile when my lady writes me but I just wish she could see me smiling when I get her letters. I'm out late.

-Augie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'll just call you funny 'cause you make us crack up! We feel you though — sometimes it's hard not to smile even when the shhh is serious — more like out of nervousness. Smiling is a good thing and we encourage you to encourage others to smile also. Smiling is contagious and just might make someone's day!

Sadness And Hurting

Sometimes I hurt so bad when my family comes to visit me. But there's a smile on the outside but in the inside there ain't nothing but hurting and pain that won't go away because when they leave it hurts so bad I can't handle it.

I feel so sad — I want to cry but the tears won't come out 'cause I haven't teared for so long but I just wanted to. But I ain't showing no weakness in my heart you know.

-Augie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Believe a man when he cries, and a woman when she sings," — an old saying. Remember, it's okay to cry — it cleanses your soul and you release certain chemicals in your brain that make you feel better afterward. And if someone tells you it makes you any less of a man — they lied.

Do You Remember?

Do you remember
 When we were beat down with billy clubs
 Hosed with a water hose
 Strip from our rights
 They told my whole family you can't eat here
 This restaurant is only for whites
 Do you remember
 Little emit till
 No one gave a damn if a black man was killed
 They beat us until we bleed
 They raped our daughters and hang us in trees
 Do you remember
 When we marched for our rights then they
 Gunned down Martin Luther King
 Everyone was devastated, last words he spoke was
 "I have a dream"
 Do you remember
 When Rosa Park stood up for what was right
 You don't remember 'cause look at the color of
 Your skin, your white!!!

-Hampton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, what a surprise piece to receive from you Hampton. You take us readers back to an era of pain for many, particularly Blacks in the South. What inspired this piece? What book are/were you reading? Tell us more about this era. What are your thoughts on society today? Is race relations any better today?

Black

The word "Black" means more than people think
 It seems to mean
 African came from our heritage
 Just because we had afros and threw our fist up in
 power
 They called us Afro-Americans
 They hates and degraded, used and abused our culture
 Just because we hungered for life and meaning
 They called us vultures
 They sold, killed, lied and robbed
 And the white man is the first person to tell you about
 the word
 God
 My people came over to America chained in ships
 Not boats
 Now we have a piece of society
 You want to judge us by our shoes, pants and coats
 They want to call us pimps, players and thugs and
 hustlers
 But the white man is really the mack
 After I'm done writing this, a lot of people will hate me
 Not for what I wrote on this paper
 Just because I'm Black!

-Hampton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Damn Hampton, you deliver yet another angry political piece, about how Black people were treated. We now have to ask you, why do you put yourself in such a predicament as a slave, being incarcerated? We also notice too many young brothers also like to give themselves names like "pimps, players and thugs and hustlers," why? Why does one feed into the stereotype? Who is the "white man?" Tell us in another piece, from where you sit tonight, what it really means to be Black?

**They want to call us pimps,
 players and thugs and hustlers
 But the white man is really the mack**

T-maine's Page

In Love With You

to my one true love
i'm not sure
when i first fell in love with you
i guess it could have been as simple as
that first time we held each other
or the first time i realized
that you kind of liked me too
i'm not sure
i just remember thinking of you more and more
and getting less and less done in the process
i remember wanting you to stay so badly
and being thrilled at the thought
i remember praying that it was you
whenever the phone would ring
but at the same time hoping it wasn't
because i didn't know how in the world
i was going to sound romantic and impressive
when what i felt was anxious and tongue-tied
sometimes it still amazes me how i get so anxious
and thrilled and thoughtful about you
i guess maybe
it's because i just keep
falling wonderfully in love with you
over and over again

-T-maine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is one of the most beautiful love poems we've published in our pages. The easy conversational tone, the poet's humility and honesty; the use of well-chosen detail. It is quite a charming and disarming poem of love. Well done! Thanks for sharing it with our readers in this, your last week, writing from the Hall to The Beat. All the best at ROP!

A Good Friend

dedicated to Hanna
Well this is just a little something to let you know that you are and will always be, a good friend. If the world had a lot more people in it like you, then I think that everybody would be happy.
So I wrote this for you — because I am leaving in two days! By the time you get this, I will be at ROP (Rites of Passage), and I just wanted to let you know that I thank you for being my friend:
one friend who understands you
is better than ten who don't
one friend who listens to you
is better than ten who won't
one friend who holds your hand
is better than ten in all the land
one friend who is always there
is better than ten who don't care
one friend who gives you good advice
is better than ten who just try to be nice
i cherish this one friend like silver and gold
this one friend is you, to have and to hold
I hope you like this. Stay up and hold your head up through the tough times. Hopefully I'll see you on the outs one day. Take care of yourself.

-Tramaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know Hanna will deeply appreciate this piece when she reads it. Every time a friend moves on, to the Y or ROP or wherever, she feels the loss — and feels that much more alone with her troubles when they're gone. Perhaps your poem will remind her of the friends she's meant so much to, and that they all carry that friendship in their hearts still, go where they will.

RIP

this is just
a little something
to let all my potnas
that have lost their lives
in the game know
you will be missed
but never forgotten

r — i — p

chris

pooda

e moe

dre

goone

tari

danny tay

lil nate

e j

key

reg

d b

ju ju

m a t

a n t

rev

j j

greedy

— if i forgot anybody

just know that you

will be missed

-T-maine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know this is your last week writing from the Hall, so we understand your wanting to close with a memorial. Hope to hear from you again, from ROP.

**If the world
had a lot
more people
in it like
you, then I
think that
everybody
would be
happy.**

Shady Boy's Page

To My Grandmother

It is okay to cry. Let the pain grow. We can overcome it. You were so pure until it was your time to go. How you left, it was pain, but where you rest, there is peace. It's because you're special, also 'cause I love you a lot.

When we used to talk, no one could get in the way. I also remember every word that you used to say. Let the calm breeze wash over your grave, where the birds fly as free as they're used to, being in the clouds like they did, just to let the clean air feel so good, over again. That will make my thoughts of you clear again.

I'll never overcome the pain. We're letting the pain overwhelm us, and all that's left is your love, to let the world know you were wonderful to your boy. Till death do us apart. Until then, rest in peace grandma.

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you miss your grandmother a lot, so when you think about her, what is your most cherished memory together? If she were here right now, what would you say to her? Write on!

It's dangerous when you keep making The same mistakes every time

Not Knowing Yourself

It's dangerous when you don't
know where your life is headed

It's dangerous when you keep making
the same mistakes every time

It's dangerous when you feel life is
falling apart

It's dangerous when life has no crisis and
you're waiting for one to happen.

It's dangerous when you don't know yourself
for who you are

-Shady Boys, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How can you get control of your life so that you know where your life is headed? How can you learn from your mistakes instead of having to repeat them all the time? How can you get to know yourself?

Sorry Mom

I know I make you mad and some days I make you laugh,
but bein' 17 ain't easy. I want you to know I love you.

Smokin' made me not think at all.

You know, I've never listened to you,
but you know I can't get a change in my life no more,
so if you can pray for me, ask God to forgive me
for what I did.

I know my grandma is praying for you and me a lot,
but I love you and I'm sorry mom.

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If your mom was here right now, what would you say to her? Why don't you send her a copy of this poem? That would bring a smile to her face in these hard times.

I'm All Alone

I'm sitting on my bed trying to think.
Every time that I look out, my heart just sinks.

Being in the Hall sucks.

It's all on me.

Sometimes I go crazy.

I just want to leave.

I'm all alone, just on my bed.

Getting out is all I'm thinking about.

I can't get it outta my mind.

I betrayed my family and my friends are gone.

I'm all alone.

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We all feel alone at one point or another. How can you regain the trust of your family and friends? Will they forgive you for the betrayal? Do you have a home to go to, with the loss of your grandma?

I'm Really Sorry

I just want to say that I'm sorry for all the things
that I said, for all the tears that you have shed over
me. I just want to say that I'm sorry for bringing up
the past and how I'd throw it in your face, so very
fast.

I just want to say that I am sorry for never
letting things go, and for being the cause why our
relationship would never grow. I just want to say
I'm sorry for all the mistakes I've made and how you
were always the one that paid.

I just want to say that I'm sorry for all the
damage that I have caused because in my heart, you
are always number one.

Dedicated to my grandma and grandpa

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's one thing to say that they are number one but action speaks louder than words. How can you show them that they're number one? How can you work on having a good relationship with your grandma and grandpa?



Young Smokey's Page

A Homeboy's Life On The Block

just a youngsta
but already packin' the gage
lettin' loose on his enemies
unfortunate to trigger his rage
main goal is to grab a newspaper
and be on the front page
knows the risk of going to jail
but he's already limited to his hood
it's like being locked in a cage
police threatenin' lil' homie
but still he ain't droppin' no names
he knows a lot 'bout
the bad side of this life
but homeboy remain the same
hopin' to live long enough
to be a major playa in the game
like the oh gees
around which he was raised
if i don't make it
at least from the hood
i got away
to me those words
he did say
i was speechless
and homie went on his way
to join his homies
a pack of wild pit bulls
unlike him they chose
to go astray
lil' homie was different
he was forced
at school an' home
he never had no support
moms was always workin'
pops always drunk or
always in jail
didn't know nothing else
but this life in hell
always usin' the money
he made off dope
to get his homies out on bail
posted on the block
wit' them two-for-ten sales
made it big pushin' shhh
couldn't be weighed
by ya anchorage scale
that last a while
but end up fallin' off
shhh hit — an' another ninja
end up gettin' shot
but that's the way it is
livin' ya life on the block

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Each week you come with such lyrical heat, it burns the page, fills your readers' hearts with fear, pity and rage. Your homie deserved better than life in a cage opening onto a terminal stage of desperation. Your poem rides like a rocket to heaven's gate, an explosive protest at young homie's tragic fate — born to lonely pain, a thirst for ghetto fame, and then sudden death. No wonder his words stopped your breath! It's as if he prophesied his death — saw no way out, so walked straight ahead. You tell his story so well, his life on the block, living hell.

Constant Cycle

at times i get jealous
at times i feel rebellious
i need help
but by askin' i feel selfish
so i remain hopeless
tryin' to regain focus
i get myself on the right pain
but obstacles destroy it
like the plague of locusts
did for moses
when he had funk with egypt
which was good for him
but for me
it's the total opposite
and when things don't go my way
my anger starts to show
and i really can't stop it
i be like screw it
and i let myself blow
back to square one
where the cycle begins
and i follow

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A cycle can be a circle or a spiral, a snake with its tail in its mouth, or a spring that each time around lifts you up a little higher off the ground — 'cause you got a little wiser. It may feel like you make the same mistake, but if you can take the pain and learn its lesson, you can change calamity into a blessing. Let your anger spill onto the page, loose all your rage into figures of consciousness, poetic protests against injustices, and ruthlessly pursue your truth. Let your lyrics shelter you in a storm, as you learn to direct your anger away from self-harm.

Like A Pit

i was raised like a red-nose' pit
so ya know i'm a savage
go'n from hood to hood
bustin' sales makin' cabbage
if ya ain't no homeboy
and got what i want
i'm gonna snatch it
don't take it personal
it's just a habit
if police show up
i'm gonna vanish
if ya get to that snitchin'
ya gonna be damaged
i ain't never been no sucka
never been no snitch
if you is y-a bound
to get busted in the lip
i was raised to take off
on a ninja on that type shhh
and never to hang around it
'cause like it or not homes
y'a product of ya environment
and i ain't tryin' to be a part
of south frisco's homicide rate
so i'm'a remain savage
and never be fake
but believe me homies
this life is no piece of cake

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lift your savage mind off the street and get savage about what you really need, 'cause you will not find it grinding powder or weed. Get your degree, then that j-o-b and get paid steadily day by day, week by week. But keep writing lyrics like this, so savagely honest you won't ever quit telling it like it is. Don't forget where you come from, but don't hold it to your head like a loaded gun. You can't win it. Stick a fork in it, 'cause it's done. You might have one more minute in the sun before the trap snaps shut. Don't be one more black man dead or locked up. Use your mentality, and start to change your reality.

Friskie's Page

Cold as ice

My heart has become
 As cold as ice
 All because you made me
 Your sacrifice
 I was in awe
 I always fell for your lies
 This is the last
 Time you'll hear my cries
 My heart has become
 As cold as ice
 I took my chances
 And I rolled the dice
 You froze my heart
 From your being so cold
 I'm starting to come out
 And I'm starting to be bold
 At one time I pictured us tighter
 For always and forever growing old
 I know I am not yet grown
 But now I'm as cold as ice
 I really should have known
 My frozen heart
 Has already been sold
 And I'm not even fifteen years old.

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: We can understand that your heart is hardened — even at fifteen — from past experience, but you can't sell your heart. No matter what harm has been done, it's yours and only yours, and therefore you always have the opportunity to melt the ice that has formed. How can you learn to protect your heart? What will it take to share it again?

Getting Hard To Breathe

It's getting hard to breathe every day
 I'm extremely lost
 And I'm trying to find my way
 I keep my lips shut
 But still have a million things to say
 Too many things going on
 It's getting hard to breathe right now.
 I'm going to get through this
 But right now I honestly don't know how
 I feel smothered and beat down
 I know as I get older,
 I going to be prison bound
 I don't even remember
 My mom appearance, scent, or voice sound
 It's been getting harder to breathe over time.
 After I get released
 Will my man still want to be mine?
 When will I be able to breathe?
 When will it be my time to smile?
 I am ready to go
 And I am ready to grind
 And I know you can see it
 'Cause I am the one who emotionally blind.

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: We feel so much of the pain you're going through in the words that you write, but we're concerned that you're boasting about being ready to grind. Will you be able to breathe? Yeah — even though it feels like the vice grip is getting ever tighter on your lungs, there's a resilience we often find we have even when we don't think we can continue on. As for smiling, that's one that you have to find from inside. What will it take to bring the smile back, even if it's initially just a tiny ray of light escaping from the locked door to your happiness? What makes you think that you're prison bound?

Love

Love is a four letter word
 Spoken so freely
 Say that word
 And become obsessed and clingy
 Love will make you
 Lose yourself with time
 And have thoughts of betrayal
 Constantly running through your mind
 "Love" ties you down
 Missing your one and only voice
 True love,
 I have not found
 Love only brings hurt and pain
 Every time you love
 You become more and more insane
 It's time I come
 Out of the rain
 In and out of love
 I should be rid of all my shame
 Love truly is a dangerous game
 One I know I should not play
 Leaves me full of sorrow
 I just got to take it day by day
 I kind of wish
 That you would stay
 I wonder what you do
 When I'm away
 Love makes me so sick
 My body just wants to give out
 Every night, your name
 I cry, scream, and shout
 I'd get so high
 To the point where I'd pass out
 Ever since I met you
 I've been afraid to fall in love
 Even though you treat me
 As if I were a fallen angel from up above
 To feel true love's affection
 Would be my dying wish
 I want the freedom to throw a glass
 And break a dish
 Be able to get my anger out
 All of it, I'm able to
 And if not, just about
 I know you "love" me
 With that, I have no doubt
 I just want to be able to live my life
 And settle down and maybe —
 Just maybe become your wife
 Let go of all
 This grief and strife
 So far, I've been able to
 Put down my cutting knife
 Please don't go
 Please don't stay
 If you "love" me
 Don't let emotions stand in my way.

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: When most people talk about love, they talk about the ideal love — all candy and roses and happy and simple and sweet. In this piece, you come with a more complex accounting of love, full of complexity and pain, yet still addictive ("To feel true love's affection / Would be my dying wish"). How will you negotiate the full territory of love: the ups and downs, don't stays and don't gos that are all part of the big picture?

Lil' Gato And Lil' LayLay's Page

In My Cell

i'm sittin' here lookin'
at the pictures on my cell wall
hopin' a plane will crash
into this facility
or the walls will simply fall
so then i could escape
and be free
continue my life
in the hayward streets
so i could be with my family
and sleep on my own bed
and not have to trip off counselors
or what they just said
i could wear my own shoes
and my own clothes
maybe i could find a hiding spot
that no one knows
maybe i could find a place
in paradise and not in jail
a place in heaven
and not in this hell
man i think about a lot
when i'm locked in my cell

-Lil' Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Crash through the gates of paradise and escape the system's watchful eyes, but don't wait for the walls to fall to realize that your freedom depends on you and what you think and do when you're outside feeling cool. Finish this time and you won't need to hide, unless you cling to hell, out of so-called pride.

Important Things

do you believe in love
do you believe in thugs
do you believe you
gotta do what you gotta
when push comes to shove
some things push you but
don't touch you it's all mental
the hall drove me to the point
of using a cell-made pencil
but different people get pushed
in different directions
hella people in here talk trash
but i'll make an exception
i know they won't run up
'cause i got my fists for protection
plus most of these people
just run the' mouths
i know what i'm capable of
i'll mess around
and blow down a house
some people call me crazy
and some call me insane
but i just look at it as
i'll sit back here and relax
i don't wanna catch another case
there's more important things than this
like one last look at my mama's face

-Lil' Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Most young people know Gandhi as a cartoon, a skinny dude in a baggy "swimming suit". But he argued and proved, two types choose to refrain from violence — the weak who live in fearful silence, and the strong whose silent gaze displays a confident courage beyond the reach of all but the proud and the few, knowing the right thing to do and following through. Refrain from violence and see your mama's face smiling.

Thank You!

This one is for the people that made a change in my life. Bad or good, I learned somethin'.

Mami:

I'm on Earth
Thank you mother
For givin' me birth
Even though I may have a little girth.

Granny:

Thank Granny
Thank you
For my first feast
Walkin' out like I was a piece
Lettin' me be me.

The Hall:

Thank you Juvenile Hall
For the first call
For lettin' me walk up and down the hall
For teachin' me to believe
That it is okay to leave
C.O.Y.C.:

Thank you C.O.Y.C.

Thank you for your groups
Thank you for makin' soup

When I was sick and had no one there

You were by my side

Now that's my "thank yous," but I just want to say thank you to everyone that has helped me out, just in case they put me in the "Y" and I don't get a chance to say "thank you."

-Lil' LayLay, San Mateo

From The Beat: There's a serious level of maturity that it takes to be able to recognize and thank the Hall and group home for being there for you. The greatest show of your appreciation for your mom giving you birth, your granny letting you be you, the Hall teaching you that it's okay to leave, and the group home for being by your side is to step up and leave, continuing your growth on the outside.

Just Keepin' It Real Oakland

Every time I read Oakland's part of The Beat
I always see, "I'm this way 'cause I'm from
Oakland," or "I don't cry 'cause I'm from
Oakland."

That's not right.

I'm from Oakland, too.

I don't put it all on Oakland.

I may be in San Mateo, but don't

Mean I'm not from the "O."

I love Oakland.

And I would hate for someone

To put all their pain on it.

'Cause if you're really from Oakland

You see we all got pain and we

Don't put it on the town

Now do we?

I'm not tryin' to hate on yo' work

Or nothing

I'm just bein' real

I can't take yo' pain.

Oakland Raiders

You know.

-Lil' LayLay, San Mateo

From The Beat: We feel you, LayLay — Oakland has its share of problems that makes it a tough place to grow up, but it also has a deep, rich history of positive community organizing and activism. To blame it for all of one's problems is not only to ignore all those positives, but also to deny the part that each individual plays in his or her incarceration. We hope that you, and all the writers from 150, can step back into the community and become part of the positive so that it's easier for the next generation to come of age in Oakland.

"What Makes You Smile?"**I Like to Smile**

my mom makes me smile
 my dad makes me smile
 my sister makes me smile
 my whole family makes me smile
 my cousin makes me smile
 i like to go shopping
 i like to go camping
 i like to go hiking
 i like to go fishing
 playing sports makes me smile

-Chris

From The Beat: We like to see you smile, and you often do, even locked up in the Hall!

Maintain

What makes me smile? Being in my varrio kickin' it wit' my homeboys; all my homies free and no rivals around — you gotta have a smile every time you think about. Also my grandma, when I see her on my home pass.

Well, to all in the, much love and respect. Watch yo' back and maintain till your release. And I'm out.

-Young Payaso

From The Beat: How 'bout next week you write us a piece dedicated to your grandma, her life, and all she does for those she loves? You've got the time, we'll bring paper and pencil.

i'll be happy

to see my mom
 and my family and friends
 i'll be happy
 to get out of juvenile hall
 and go home again

-Kevin

From The Beat: Amen.

Lil' Mama

What makes me smile is you lil' mama?
 When I think about you lil' mama?
 All I want is you lil' mama
 When you smile lil' mama
 I need to talk to you lil' mama
 When you smile lil' mama?
 You mine lil' mama?
 From the heart lil' mama?
 Remember I gave you that letter lil' mama?
 When you came in that house wit' my sister lil' mama?
 Me and you lil' mama?
 You know who it is lil' mama?
 Keep it lit lil' mama
 Stay solid lil' mama
 Holla at me lil' mama

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: How is your lil' mama doing without you in her life? Since you love her so much, why did you choose to be taken away from her? What needs to change in your life so that you can be with her?

Happy Birthday

what makes me smile
 is to hear that my cousin is alive
 because july twenty-seventh, today
 is his birthday and i have a cousin
 named harold that got killed
 only thirty minutes before his birthday
 and he didn't even get to see
 his eighteenth birthday — so
 that's what makes me smile
 to hear and see that my cousin is alive
 on his birthday — why?
 because he is in the dope game
 and it's easy to get killed and die
 but nobody hasn't killed him
 and i pray to god nothing happens to him
 happy birthday cousin lil' virg aka lil' vicious
 from yo' lil' cousin trenell aka tree girl
 and i haven't forgotten about your birthday

-Trenell

From The Beat: Our birthday wish for your cousin is that he gets out of the dope game before he ends the same as your other cousin. And that's not hating, it's just stating the fact that when it gets that dangerous in the street — it's time to change your act.

Happy Times

The only thing that would make me happy or smile would be if I can get a release or at least get sent to Camp. But what would really make me smile would be if I got to see and touch my girl — but I would be happy if I got to do both.

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: How can you convince the judge that you deserve to be given another chance? How can you make it so that you can be with your lady?

What Makes Me Smile

is seeing my girlfriend
 and also seeing her happy
 what also makes me smile
 is seeing the look on my mom's
 my dad's and my step-mom's faces
 when i get good grades
 and also doing the right things

-Eric

From The Beat: Your poem and your good heart, make us smile!

Time With Family

The time with my family makes me smile
 It makes all time behind these walls worthwhile
 I beat myself senseless and cry myself to sleep
 To know who I've hurt and who wants to hurt me
 I love to joke a lot and play different schemes and games
 People love to be around me, and love to have good times
 Bad good times that is. I smoke and drink, and sometimes thief.
 The thought of my Lord God make me smile
 When the peace of the Lord is with me
 There is no greater joy and feeling than that.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: Hmm, Jeremy, you're recognizing that your idea of a good time is bad. What do you think about that? Is there something else you can focus on, rather than smoking and drinking? We hear a lot of you all talkin' about, you can't wait to get out, to get your drank and smoke on. But what else is there? Once you're high or drunk, then what? What is your life about? Would your life be complete if you could get drunk or high in the Hall? Sometimes in life we need to make these decisions looking at the big picture. What do you want out of life? You said, there is no greater joy than that feeling of peace from the Lord. Well... how are you going to achieve that?

**When the
 peace of
 the Lord
 is with me
 There is
 no greater
 joy and
 feeling
 than that.**

**it's easy to
 get killed
 and die**

What Makes Me Smile

There are a lot of things that make me smile. One of them is being able to do what I want. When I say doing what I want, I mean — positive things! One other thing, is being with my female and family!

-Lil' June

From The Beat: Want what's best, then do what you want — and you'll pass the test!

What Makes You Smile?

Being with my girl and family as well as getting money makes me smile. And what would make me smile the most is getting out of the Hall and never coming back to this dump.

-Ashton- Adogg

From The Beat: Those are some real nice things to smile about. What is it about your girl, about your family and about making money, that makes you smile? What makes them smile?

Sorry**Make Me Smile**

my mom makes me smile
 because she makes me feel
 good — and smile — and
 my girlfriend makes me smile
 getting out of here makes me smile

-Victor

From The Beat: We wish you all the best at Fred Finch. We hope you find many occasions to smile. Write. You have our address.

Smile

When I think of my boo, I get butterflies in my tummy. I love being wit him. It's like I'm in a wonderful paradise of fantasies. Its like were just meant to be.

I wouldn't pick no one else but him. I never can stop smiling when I am with him. I love him so much. I love the fact that he shows me so much love, I smile and fall, 'cause my knees get weak.

I love to smile when I'm with you.

Love you babe,
 Smile! Smile!

-Tinkerbelle

From The Beat: Ahh... that's so sweet. What is it about this special guy, that makes him so special to you? What do you see in the future of your relationship together? Tell us more, share some special memories; and smile.

"What Makes You Smile?"**Few Smiles!**

Not many things make me smile. Beautiful ladies are one of the things that make me smile.

Also stealing cars gives me the greatest rush, basically speeding in a stolo with a big ass smile on my face. On top of that you can easily pull in 3000 to 8000 dollars by bringing it into a chop shop. I'm not telling anybody to do shhh, basically to find something legal and get the same feeling.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: What legal activity could you engage in that would give you the same rush as stealing cars? How about playing some GTA (Grand Theft Auto)? It seems real when you're playing it and it could keep you away from incarceration. Or what about going to Great America?

Keep Me Happy

getting and staying
out of trouble
keeps me happy
and getting out
and staying out
of juvenile hall
and other places
i'm committed
keeps me happy
just going out
keeps me happy

-Krystie

From The Beat: Make those good choices from the start, and keep a happy heart.

Makes Me Feel Cool

it makes me feel happy
to see all my people out of jail
and to see them on their feet
just seeing my friends on the outs
makes me feel cool

-Joshua

From The Beat: To stay on the outs, change what you're about. Change what you do, and you can stay free and feel coo'.

Food makes me smile 'cause it taste so good.**What Makes Me Smile?**

My best friend Kelly makes me smile 'cause she's always been there for me and she's always down. This dude I like makes me smile, 'cause he's so fine.

Food makes me smile 'cause it taste so good. Money makes me smile 'cause money makes the world go round. Clothes make me smile 'cause I love to stay fitted out.

-Melissa

From The Beat: What else makes you smile. What was the last time you smiled? What was it about? Does reading your piece in the Beat make you smile? It makes us smile.

Fake My Smiles Away

every day
i fake my smiles
so sad how i can't stay
steady
and be myself
no one likes me
why was you
no need to lie anymore right
wrong he said
but since he been gone
ain't no sunshine where i go
but again i am back on top
but still every day
i fake my smile away
and i still will
that's just how i pay my bills

-Alexandria

From The Beat: When a breaking heart starts to fall apart, and you smile to hide the pain — sometimes that fake smile's your only shelter from the rain. Some say, fake it till you make it and the pain will fade. Sometimes you just have to take it day by day.

That Reason I Smile

Even if it's a bad thing to say, but some people are doing life for taking a life and they're never going to see the light of day.

I will complete my program in six months and then go home on the weekend pass from camp, when they will still be here. That's what makes me smile. Because behind every black cloud there is a silver lining so with that said, the reason i smile is my family so i could turn my life around. Because i am getting older, not younger. In short, that's the reason i smile.

Because you only live once and i want to be successful. So ten or fifteen years from now i could sit back, talk about this time in here and at camp while at my mom's big house that i just paid cash money for, with a fat plate, with the whole family.

I think about that every night, that's the reason i smile.

-George

From The Beat: You probably are smiling 'cause you get to go home, not 'cause they have to stay, right? Come on now, no one like to watch others suffer, right? Okay well, we know one thing for certain is that the happiest people in this world are people that care about others. You obviously care about your mom, and would love to see her happy. Don't you think this would be a great world if everyone had that kind of love for everyone else?

I Smile

when i'm on
the toilet
and every time
that someone
farts when
they are going
to the bathroom

-Luis

From The Beat: We bet some of your readers are smiling, too.

My Smile

What makes me smile? Most importantly to see another day and kick it with the homies on the spot smokin' and drinkin' havin' fun, — you feel me? It's an every day thang to me! Doin' what i do if it's sellin' dope, pimpin', robbin' banks and what not — you feel me? 'Cause that's the way it is. I got to get it how i live out there in these streets.

But to another thought i'm sittin' here with others choppin' up game with mobstas, nothing but memories, locked down. Gotta stand tall — head up — eyes open don't want to miss nothing. All i can do now is smile!

-Yung Dru

From The Beat: If you gotta get it how you live it then you gotta understand that incarceration and death is a consequence. Ya feel that? Most folks who proclaim themselves as "mobstas" end up leaving this life through some kind of box — a jail cell or a coffin!

To Smile

My family, when i do good and stay away from sin.
When i'm proud of myself and others.
When i go home to my family!

-Abbas

From The Beat: How do you envision your life the day you leave the system and return to your community, your family?

What makes you smile?

When i wake up
When i call my Granny
When i'm full on sanity
When i'm full of steak cheese and spaghetti
What makes you smile?
When i know i'm going to beat my trial
When i'm writing to The Beat
When i'm on the street
When people keep it lit for me

-Lil' Shawn

From The Beat: We hope someday soon you can return to what it is that makes you smile, and you never throw away your freedom again.

Smile

What makes me smile? My little brothers. My brothers is the only thing in the world that makes me smile, besides drugs.

I don't really care about the rest of my family because they all stab me in my back. I only trust my little brothers and sister. They the only ones that make me smile still.

If a person makes me smile except my little brothers and sister, it will be God himself, when my time comes.

-Tucan

From The Beat: Does your love for your brothers ever conflict with your life decisions? Do they look up to you? You said that you can trust your little brothers and sister, do they feel the same trust with you? You're the big brother; you've had more life experiences, what kind of advice would you offer them? Keep smiling.

**Gotta stand
tall — head up
— eyes open
don't want to
miss nothing**

What Makes Green Eyes Smile

What makes me smile is when i get out of this fake ass place and go to the pad.

What makes me smile is when i see my lil' sister and my family when i get out!

What makes me smile is when i have my lady with me and... you know the rest!

What makes me smile is when i'm free again and can do what i want when i want and don't got to ask staff.

What makes me smile is when i'm in my 'hood drinkin' and shhhh!

What's gonna make me smile while i'm in here?!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Well if everything that makes you smile is out there — then get your butt out there! Why are you risking your freedom if you love it so much? Get a little control over your life Green Eyes!

"What Makes You Smile?"*Freedom Smile*

The thing that makes me smile the most is knowin' I'ma be out one day. That keeps a smile on my face, knowin' all the things waiting for me when I get out. Knowing that I ain't going back to the same shhh also keeps me smiling.

-Tru B5

From The Beat: When we read your commitment to stay away from the things that brought you here, it puts a smile on our faces! Thanks.

**it makes me
smile to know
that I have
support outside
of these walls**

Other Than Myself

What makes me smile is knowing I don't have to do this time by myself. I'm doing the time physically by myself, but emotionally me and the ones I love and the ones that love me are doing the time with me.

I'm not smiling because others are hurt by my actions or by where I'm at, but it makes me smile to know that I have support outside of these walls, to know that I have a place to go once I'm let up out of here, and not just going to be out there by myself. Because when you have no one, what you got to live for? Only yourself, and if you ain't doing anything with your life, that ain't much to live for.

So what makes me smile? When I go to court and see my family and my girl showing me I have something to live for other than myself.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: We really admire the fact that you are able to find the positive in this situation where so many others in your situation can find nothing but the negative. How will you repay this gift of love you feel so powerfully? When you get out of here, what do you think the best gift you could give them is?

This Doesn't Make Me Smile

What makes me smile? Now, only certain people in my life. I love to smile, laugh, and to have a good time, but at the same time, there is a time for everything. For me to smile, it doesn't take a lot, but the life that I'm living ain't too funny.

-Jada GU

From The Beat: We feel you. This is not a situation to produce that many smiles. On the other hand, it's good to be the kind of person that likes to laugh and have a good time, so we imagine you smiling big when you're out from under the system.

My Little Brother

My lil' brother make makes me smile, that lil' ninja is hella funny. He be playing hella much, doing all kind of stuff. I'm glad he's only three so he don't know everything.

I'm going to change my life before he turn a teenager, 'cause I whip his lil' ass if I he came to YGC.

-Young Robb B2

From The Beat: We sure hope you don't wait too long, for his sake and yours. You need to kick your own butt for being in YGC, now, so you won't come here again.

These Things Make Me Smile

The thing that makes me smile is to see my mom proud of me.

To have that good feeling when I succeed and to hear that my grandmother is proud of me and that she's healthy.

To see myself fulfilling my goals in life.

When I draw and I express my feelings when I do it.

To know everything is going to be okay.

As soon as they open these doors and tell me I'm released.

As soon as they open these doors and I see my mom and I give her a big hug.

When I'm playing with my four-year-old niece, like I take her to the park and run around with her an when she calls me uncle.

-Rodrigo B2

From The Beat: These are great things to smile about, Rodrigo. What goals do you have for yourself? Will you draw us something for The Beat?

These Thoughts Make Me Smile?

The thought of having a baby makes me smile.

The thought of me and my girl having someone new to love.

The thought of being with them and not being in here. Being there for my family and helping them.

The fact that I'm shopping for baby clothes.

Knowing that all my dreams may come true.

Knowing my family will be there to help me.

Knowing that I'm having a family of my own.

-Jose B2

From The Beat: This all sounds sweet and simple. What has taken you away from all this?

Smile For Me

Something that makes me smile is when I see my mom smile, or when she's happy. When I'm free and my bro is free, that's when she smiles. I smile when I'm happy with my girl and we ain't arguing. I smile when I got money in my pocket and I ain't locked up.

As a young person, it hurts to see my mom get pain inflicted on her, because Pops was drunk and things weren't going his way. That day he took it out on my mom, and many times she would cry, I would say leave him, but I was too young, so she wouldn't listen.

-Jay Dah B4

From The Beat: Is your pops still with your mom? We can only imagine the scars you bear (on your soul) from watching your mom get beat on by your dad. Did it teach you anything about how you want to relate to women in general, and that special one in particular?

Being Around The Ones I Love

Being around the ones I love makes me smile.

Losing the ones I love makes me frown.

-Diamond B4

From The Beat: How simple. How elegant. How profound!

Smile

I smile when I get to see my family and friends. I smile when I get my freedom back. I would be very happy if I got to leave this place.

-Andrew B2

From The Beat: Leaving is one thing, not coming back is another. What will it take for this to be the last time you're in the Hall?

Family Makes Me Smile

Seeing my family and friends, then watching them play basketball and then seeing my girlfriend. Then, after that, hitting some marijuana and some Hennessey.

-Tray B1

From The Beat: If the things you had in freedom — family, girlfriend, sports — make you smile, how does it make you feel to be in the Hall? So, why did you give the system the power to take you away from the things that make you smile and put you in a place that makes you cry? Will you make the same choices next time? We hope not. Good luck!

**As a young
person, it
hurts to see my
mom get pain
inflicted
on her**

Nothing Can Make Me Smile

What's up, Beat? The only thing that I have to say is there is nothing that can make me smile. I'm up in here wit' a frown. I've been wearin' this sad frown for two years.

The only way my frown turns into a happy face smile is when I leave the system and go home to my family for good. That's when a real smile be on my face. So for now, I'm wearin' this frown until I leave.

-Jay Baby B4

From The Beat: This would be a lot sadder for us to have to respond to if we didn't know that between the time you wrote this and we're responding today, you did get out! Congratulations! If, by some chance, you get to read this, Jay Baby, we want to thank you for taking The Beat seriously, for speaking up, for writing, and for always respecting us. We hope to hear from you from the outs — and, of course, that you stay on the outs!

Freedom Makes Me Smile

When I could kick it outside anytime I want, do anything I want outside, kick it with girls, my boys and my family.

-Forgot To Sign B1

From The Beat: You had everything that makes you smile on the outs, so why did you forfeit it all and get yourself busted? Apparently, you valued something more than the freedom that made you so happy. What was it?

"Hurts So Bad"**My Lying Uncle**

The biggest thing that ever hurt me was when my uncle played me. It was when I went to court and my uncle didn't show up, but I didn't trip off of it.

The court said I had the right to be released to my uncle, so I called my uncle later on that night. I said, "Can you pick me up tomorrow. I got the right to be released to you." He said, "OK, I'll be there in the morning."

I said, "All right, I'll see you in the morning." So, the next day, I waited the whole day until visiting time. That's when my mom came. I asked her where was my uncle, and she said, "He doesn't want anything to do with you."

-Mikey

From The Beat: Why would he tell you yes on the phone, then tell your mother something like that? We would feel truly hurt, just like you, if we expected our family to be there for us, and they didn't show up, especially after promising they would. Did you ever talk to him about this, or is he talking to you?

This Time

This time I came to the Hall hurt me the most, because this time is the longest time I came to the halls. I feel really bad this time 'cause this is my third time getting locked up.

I was feeling very sad when I first got here, but now as the days pass, I'm feeling better and better because I got locked up for a small case. If I didn't get caught, maybe in the future I would have got caught with a bigger case. This time I came here as a lesson to learn.

-Andrew B2

From The Beat: Good attitude, Andrew. We really hope you can keep this in mind when you are faced with temptations again, and what we've hope you've learned is to keep your game legit and not just to do your crimes better.

What Hurts

What hurt me and still hurts is when my big bra got killed after a party on Jan 18, '04 just because someone got beat up in the party and went to get his gun. He just started shooting and my big bra got hit.

It hurts me so bad because when he was on the ground dying, he called my name. So that will hurt me for life. It really hurts because now that I am locked up, I can't go give his mom a huge and kiss.

-DeAndre B2

From The Beat: What a tragic story, DeAndre. People are so quick to shoot these days. Although it's sad that your brother called your name, it's also beautiful to know he loved you. Can you imagine living a positive, long life as a way to keep his love alive?

Hurts So Bad

I think Steven owes me an apology because he made my life become hella messed up, and he's the reason why I'm on probation! So, oh yeah, forget him 'cause he's running back already.

But I'm gone this time, fo' sho! No mo' staying in the streets, doing dirt fo' you 'cause I got it like that now and always. Get steppin' right now!

-Baby Girl GU

From The Beat: Well, we don't know the details of what happened between you and Steven, but if it leads to you staying off the streets and not doing dirt any more, then it was worth it!!

I Hurt Her A Lot

Someone I have hurt before was my ex-girlfriend. I didn't expect to cause her the type of pain I felt, and I ended up hurting her more than I thought I would. After what happened, it felt bad, because I was with the girl for two years, and I knew that she loved me, and because of what happened, I couldn't be with her anymore.

I apologized and told her I was sorry, but I still felt bad, and kind of mad at myself. I couldn't make things better, because we could never be with each other again, but we still keep in touch with each other from time to time to see how we're doing. If I could go back and do it over again, I wouldn't have did what I did.

-Choppa B4

From The Beat: Whatever you did, Choppa, we're sorry it ended this way. At least you still keep in touch, and you have acknowledged the pain you caused. That is something to be proud of.

Hate Hurts

Hate hurts so bad, I can't hate someone my own color.

-B-love B1

From The Beat: Hate does hurt so bad, B. Love, but it hurts everyone, not just people who happen to be your color. Do you think it's right when other races hate your color? Why do you hate people of other colors? What's the difference?

I'm Hurting The Ones Who Love Me The Most

I feel like I'm hurting the ones who love me the most because I made stupid mistakes, and now I have to deal with it. It's tough, but I'm holding on strong, and just hope when I get out they will forgive me.

I try my best to get my life together and move on from this mess, because it's hard for the ones you love to see their faces when they come to see you.

-Unknown B4

From The Beat: These "stupid mistakes" you made, can you control them in the future? Didn't you know before you did them that you could end up hurting the ones you love? Well, now that you know it firsthand, will you stop making stupid mistakes when you get out? What will you be giving up in order to protect those that love you from the pain you've caused them?

**when he was
on the ground
dying, he
called my
name**

What Has Hurt Me

What has hurt me in my life is when the police took me from my family and my first love. Well, first, she was just my girl friend and she told me she loved me.

When I called her from CPS, I said, "If you really love me you would talk to your mom for me?" She asked me what she should say to her mom. I said, "Tell her to adopt me," and she did. So I was living with her and I did some dirt and got caught up and they took me from her.

When I called her, she cried and that hurt me really bad. I love her very much.

-B-love B1

From The Beat: Who do you blame the police or yourself for where you are now? If her family adopted you, they must love and have trusted you. Doing dirt may have really hurt them. How do you feel about what you did? When you get out, can you still live with them? Can you rebuild their trust in you? Have you apologized to her family? How can you make things better with your girl and her family?

Hurt So Bad

The person who hurt me the most was my girl friend. How I dealt with my sadness is by not calling her the next day and not answering my cell phone when she called it. I'm still hurting over it. It taught me to seek revenge on her. I hurt my girlfriend. I caused her a very good purpose. I felt a whole lot better when I hurt her.

Yes, I was very sorry and I had no choice but to apologize. Of course I made it better with this person. I would not change what I'm doing just to hurt someone else. How I was hurt was because that I wanted my girlfriend to come and see me one day, to give her something and she thought I was playing with her, so she never showed up. What it taught me was to never invite her in on nothing, then to never attempt to give her nothing.

My advice is to keep your heads up, my young brothers.

-Tray B1

From The Beat: Did you feel better after you got your revenge on your girlfriend by hurting her, or did you feel better after you apologized for hurting her? Are you two still together (that is, when you're out)? If you are, then you're going to have to reconsider your decision not to invite her anywhere or give her anything. It sounds to us that you and she just had a little misunderstanding, and that happens to every couple sooner or later.

THE BEAT

**I was very
sorry and
I had no
choice but to
apologize**

"Hurts So Bad"**Hurts So Bad**

It hurts so bad to know that my mom is hurting from me being in here. My little brother and sister are hurting, too. I hate to know that I can't even see my family, all day, every day.

I always think about getting out as soon as I go to my placement for 90 days. So, when I do finish the placement, I bet my mom will be happy, along with the rest of my family.

-Jb B4

From The Beat: We're sure that's a bet you'd win. We can imagine how happy they (and you) will be for that reunion. After that, it's up to you to remember the pain you have caused them and yourself, and do what you need to do not to repeat it.

Hurts So Bad

I hurt so bad when I got up one day from grinding hard from sun up to sun down.
I could have went to the party,

But my eyes was on money,
My pockets was low and I was feeling kinda bummy. What's funny is I would have been right there with my ninja

Whether a gun or a road flare,
But my ninja is gone and it ain't no coming back.
He got shot ever a coat

He wasn't selling dope.
Just trying to have fun with the homies
He wasn't looking to get smoked.

I was feeling like wiping every ass in the room.
When I got that phone call and the news to prove
I was getting everyone and everything in sight
And everyway that I could.

RIP Scharod.

I love you, my ninja, everything's all good.

-Young Robb B2

From The Beat: More good writing. This is one of the few times we'd be happy to hear you were being all about your money. Same old question: did you learn anything from your homie's death; has it made you think about changing your lifestyle?

When I Got Caught

When I got caught with that gun and charged with armed robbery and assault and battery.

It didn't hurt till I got in the system and kept coming back.

Now it hurts the worst 'cause I don't know when I'm going to get out.

-Young Samm B2

From The Beat: It's usually the consequences that hurt and not the crime itself. Not to hate, but do you think at all about how the victims of your assault and battery feel?

Hurts So Bad

What hurt s me the most is when I have to get up in YGC and do what they tell me to do, things that I don't need to do, like clean up where someone is going to mess it up again. But the clean up part don't hurt, it's when I'm locked up and can't get out. Like DMX said, "I'm slipping, falling and I can't get up." But I'm going to get up, and down!

-Lil' Clap B1

From The Beat: What hurts you is being in jail. And this jail is easy compared to what's waiting down the line. Can you use the time to really think about what you're doing with your life on the outs? What can you do to change your patterns, the ones that bring you here, before you find yourself facing major time in major places? What do you like doing that doesn't risk your freedom? Whatever that is, go for it.

What Hurts Most

What hurt me the most was when my best homies got killed 'cause I never seen my ninja before he died or before I came here. But don't think the wrong way, because I will still be hurt because he is gone and I will never see him till I get out there. And I am not trying to be there right now 'cause I got to hold it down for block. But I can't do it right now because I'm going to Glen Mills.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: Not going wanting to die because you still want to hold it down for the block is precisely the thing that's going to get you there sooner rather than later, J-Stub. Get bigger than the block, J-Stub, you're being sent to Glen Mills because people believe you can be more. Don't waste your life.

In Front Of My Mom

It hurt so bad when I was told in front of my mom that I wouldn't be released.

See, before this incident, I was always released whenever I went in front of the judge. So, when they said that I was going to be held for my hearing, I looked at my mom and she had a sympathetic look on her face. That made me wanna start time all over again. I love my mom.

-Diamond B4

From The Beat: When you say you were always released before, how many times are we talking about? How many times will it take for you to see how much you are truly hurting your mother that you love? What does love mean? Does it carry any obligations or responsibilities? Like what?

My Big Bro

It hurts when I think about my big bro, Steven. He died a few years ago. He died playin' ball. He smoked grass and other stuff too much, and that's why he died on the basketball court. He was only seventeen.

The reason why he was so special to me was because he was an influence in my life. Whatever I needed he gave it to me. He used to play sports and I used to watch his football games. My family knew his family; that is why I say he is my big bro.

-Sean B1

From The Beat: Your "big brother" sounds like a wonderful guy, Sean. We don't anyone who's died of smoking grass, but lots of other things can cause terrible things to happen to the body and brain, including killing you. That's so sad. We hope that other youth reading what you've written will learn what drugs can do to their bodies.

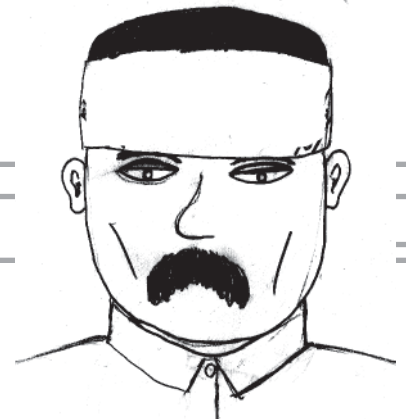
What's Hurts Me

What has hurt me? the system in a way, being way from my family, my son and mother. How do I deal with my pain, anger and sadness in jail? I like talking to some of the people that work here about my problems, taking deep breaths, and help from my PO, teaching me how to change my lifestyle.

I'm still going through this process in jail; it's kind of stressing me out, but again, it's helping me because now my mind is in the stage where I'm ready to change. My PO said that I had hurt her supervisor, but I really don't remember, because I'm not the type of person that hurts people. It was like they were trying to arrest me. My heart dropped real quick. I got very scared and nervous, and all I was thinking about is my son and my freedom.

-Benicia GU

From The Beat: Good, honest writing, Benicia. You sound like you're open to listening to folks who are trying to help you, and that is a good quality. What do you feel like you need to change in order to regain and maintain your freedom. When you have troubles on the outs, who do you talk to?

**My Family Sticks Together**

It hurts so bad, especially for my mother, and my family, me being in here. I'm a big part of my family. I have good relationships with most of my family. They tell me it's like a big gap, missing me while I'm gone. I hurt because they're my life and my family sticks together.

I'm missing little things like homemade food, playing video games, with my cousin or something.

-D-Paypa Bound B4

From The Beat: Do feel a sense of responsibility for the pain your family is feeling because of your absence? Whatever you did to get here means that, at least for a minute, you put something else above your family. What will your priorities be when you get out of here? Will you be able to remember the pain you're describing, and use the memory to prevent a re-occurrence?

**For the first time
ever I'm in jail**

Does My PO Have A Heart?

I hurt myself by making the mistake that I made to come in jail. At the same time, I hurt my family, too, because I miss them and they can't see me how they usually did.

But my probation officer is a cold person. I followed all the court order rules. She still tried to send me to the Ranch.

For the first time ever I'm in jail, I had good grades and stuff, and I graduated from high school on stage. She didn't want me to go to college. Rather, she wanted me to go to the Ranch.

I mean my case was serious, but I'm not a bad person, and I take care of business, but the judge just set me down for a few weeks before I go to college. I'm not mad-it's better than going to the Ranch. Sometimes I look at my PO and I wonder to myself if she even has a heart.

-M B4

From The Beat: We can't speculate as to whether your PO has all her organs or not, but we can say that the judge has given you a gift which it's up to you to appreciate (and do the right thing), or disrespect (and do the wrong thing). It seems like you realize that you put yourself into the system's sharp claws, which makes it difficult to blame others, including your PO, for your predicament. But knowing the possible consequences now, it's up to you whether this is a rope to pull yourself up with, or a rope to hang yourself with.

"Hurts So Bad"

True Love

i been through so much
and out of all my life
i only been in love
one time but that one time
was true love but the person
did not love me back
so it hurt bad
and you know what
i find no one else
not like him
he was very special
but there's someone
there for me

-Alexandria

From The Beat: Even when it feels unimaginable that your broken heart will ever heal, what you say is true — there is someone out there for you! Yet when all is said and done, you need to be your number one first, even more so when your heart hurts. Word.

Hurtin' Without My Baby

Nobody really hurt me, but what is hurtin' me inside, is that I'm not with my baby girl at her house chillin' with her and her daughter; just postin' up, cleanin' up after little Alyssa.

But it's all good. I started to like cleaning up after that little, sweet girl; especially just knowin' that I'm bein' some help to my baby girl, Stella.

I can't wait to go to Camp, so I can spend time with my baby girl and Alyssa, because they make me happy. Well, I'm out for now. I'll see you soon!

-Young Scooby

From The Beat: It sounds as if you have a loving and a gentle soul, and that you're a blessing to Stella and little Alyssa when you're in their home. So don't let riding with the homies, have you locked up and feeling lonely. Too many go from the Camp back to the Hall, and some on to Rita or the Y. Be wiser — try!

Broken Heart II

My name is Josh. I have a broken heart. My heart was broken because of my ex-girlfriend. She might or might not love me, but I love her.

She was my everything, and I'm dying inside because I'm away from her — because she's probably with another man! But I hope she can see all the love I had and still have to offer.

I think about her more than ever. Her parents don't want us together. Her friends don't want us together — and I bet they're happy that we aren't together anymore! But I hope she still knows that I love her for who she is, not for her good looks or nice body.

Some of y'all may think I'm frontin', but I'm not. Love is a strong word — but the best word to describe how I feel for this girl is, love! 'Cause that's how I feel.

Her name is Alicia, the girl. I called her my baby girl. That's what she is to me, and this is how I feel.

-Josh

From The Beat: What can be harder than to be separated by bars from the one you love, especially when you're no longer together. It's hard not to let your imagination run wild, but if you do, it will only brutalize you. The best thing you can do, is work toward being the sort of man she would want you to be. And then when you step out free, be yourself — and what will be, will be.

Mother-In-Law

I've been hurting my mother-in law by being up in this hellhole. I wish I could turn back the hands of time. I would, but I don't think she would be more happy, because I've really hurt her badly. I just want to go home.

-OJ Simpson

From The Beat: What can you do so that you can make her proud instead of hurt Juice? How can you right the wrong or is it too late? Have you ever apologized?

Makes Me Mad, Or Hurt

what hurts me so bad
is when i get into family problems
because i just don't want to
go through family problems
'cause every time i go through that
they always serious — so
things like that make me mad (or hurt)

-Joshua

From The Beat: Even if you don't think it's fair, you can choose not to add fuel to the fire already there. Or are the problems not between you and them? It's even more difficult for you then!

That Hurt

Man, I've been here since March, waitin' to see what they gone do with me... I just got sentence to the Y, so that lightweight hurt me, plus a few of my potnas done got killed so that's been affecting me.

I've been missin' my bra bras Ray-Ray and Mar, I miss them to death.

RIP JJ, Greedy, Ant, B-Bo, Criddy Bo, Ju-Ju, and to my aunties RIP, see you when I get there, it hurts so bad.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: You've been locked up for a minute, and now you know your fate, CYA. If you can see this as a positive, maybe your incarceration is saving your life from being another RIP. What thoughts go through your head when you think of losing potnas to violence? We wish you the best in doing a good program in CYA, and succeeding in the free world, on parole, when you are released.

Three For The Beat

Hurt So Bad: Y'all know what hurt so bad? My life! My life is hurt right now. I'm in here facing YA time for somebody else' dope. So, you tell me — how would you feel?

Sympathy: I had sympathy for my patna when he was in here facing five years for a drug raid. It was looking ugly for him, so I was feeling sorry for him — that's my bra!

What Makes You Smile: What makes me smile, is — money, my girl, my family, my freedom, jus' having fun!

-Yitty

From The Beat: We'd feel very bad if we were doing time for someone else's dope. Won't he/she step forward and take responsibility? How did it all fall on your shoulders?

Hurts So Bad

The only thing that hurts me so bad, is being away from my family. I can't stand it! And I never realize until I am away from them!

To my family, you know who you are, I love you.

-Lil' June

From The Beat: You're living that two-family life: the family at home and the one in the park. To stay home-free, you need to light a spark in your heart and stop lighting up at the park.

Hurtin' 'Em So Bad

I been beaten for so long

But I refuse to stop

I just got my dreads hit

Had to let 'em drop

On the block I stay saucy fitted

Wearin' a throwback or beanie

Forever keepin' it real

Never messin' wit' a weanie

Ninjas think they hard

But they really can't see me

Wit' my folks watchin' my back

That's better then a personal genie

When I feel it's gettin' cold

I need a sip of Hennessy

I keep it low key when I feel

Ninjas start to envy me

But on the real

I keep at least a rack in my pocket

And someone's on my feet

As much as you hope and wish

You'll never catch Emmy-boe

Starvin' on the streets

But I'll be happy

When I'm free at last

Back at home

hurтин' 'em so bad

-Emmy-Boe

From The Beat: Do you always want to be Emmy-Boe from the streets? How will you ever find a sense of peace? What kind of life are you leading and where has it taken you so far? Where will it continue to take you? Do you like where the road ends? Keep pushing the pencil...

RIP Mom

All bullshhh aside, it's young Mono. Let me start by saying what's up to all the homies from the East Bay, and to all locked up in Alameda County. "I thought you thought!"

But back to the real deal. I got caught up on July eleventh, and what hurts the most is — July sixteenth is the memorial of my mom's death! And I couldn't visit her at the cemetery along with my family.

My sista wrote me a letter and broke it down to me. I got the letter today. And that stuff hurt the most! The thing about it is — my mom's birthday is July thirty-first and I'm still gonna be locked in this ditch.

That's the real deal, know what I mean! Rest In Peace, Moms. See ya when I see ya!

-Mono

From The Beat: Being locked in one of these rooms is bad enough without having to miss funerals or memorials of loved ones. In memory and in honor of your mother, take a vow to step back from doing those things that

Broken Heart

i have sympathy for my girlfriend
because she thinks she can date
some twenty-one-year-old cop
and she's only fifteen

so i dumped her or she dumped me
either way she didn't get that cop
she might want me back

i don't know i hope she does
i love her — love is a strong word
but that's how i feel about her

i've cried about getting dumped by her
i've shed many tears for my pain

but i do have sympathy for her
because of my love for her

so my love for her must be real
her name is alicia and this is my poem

for the beat within

-Josh

From The Beat: You have a generous heart. We agree with you that there's not much future between a fifteen-year-old girl and a twenty-one-year-old cop. Is it all in her mind? Some say love is blind, but hearts can be foolish or wise. With all the love you're giving, let your heart fill with wisdom.

"Sympathy"

I Had Sympathy

Yes, I had sympathy for some people and I have sympathy for some animals, especially when I see animals that are hurt, or something, and I cannot do anything about it. It really makes me feels very sad.

I be wondering if I was that animal and I was hurt, would somebody help me? I try to help the animals, but when I try, they get as far away from me as they can. I say to myself, I tried.

-Hitta B4

From The Beat: There is something very appealing about anyone who reaches out to help an animal in pain. Have you ever thought that human beings are also animals, and that when you see one of them that's hurt or in pain, reaching out to help them is just as important as trying to help an injured dog?

I Got My Own Problems

Sympathy... I really don't feel sympathy too much, but I do feel it sometimes. Like once I know I did something that ain't right, if it really just out of pocket — when I'm at home by myself playing the game or just lying on my bed, I think about people that got hurt or get hurt over something that they had nothing to do with. But that's only when I'm the one who caused the pain.

As far as feeling bad for others that ain't got nothing to do with me, that don't usually happen. The only time something like that happens is when the victim is someone who can't do for they self and a person took advantage of him.

But on the one, it be some sad things that be happening to females in The Beat that I be reading that I be having feelings of compassion for, because I feel like females should be respected. But from what I be reading, ninjas out there ain't respect nobody, let alone a female.

But hey, I only have sympathy for a few. I got my own problems.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: This is interesting, Leek, and we can understand your thinking on this subject. But let us ask you, do you ever get an overwhelming feeling of sympathy for the entire world, for everybody in it, for the pain that is a part of every human life, from Africa to America? Just wondering.

No Sympathy

I don't have sympathy for anyone 'cause ninjas didn't have any sympathy for my homies. So forget ninjas. One love to all locked down in YGC.

-O. Nasty B5

From The Beat: Where do you imagine a society (a city, a street, a block, a family) that has no sympathy ends?

Fatherless Child

I have had sympathy for someone before. I remember havin' sympathy for a young girl who was livin' with my family. I felt sympathy for her because she had a little boy and her parents wouldn't let her go home. The young lady's baby's father was killed and she had no money or a place to rest her head.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: This is a sad story. Why wouldn't her parents let her live at home? Whatever happened to her?

To The Y

Sometimes I feel bad for the people who go up to the Y. That's because if you talk to some of these people you would not think they deserved it . . . but they did do something wrong. I also begin to feel bad for the family who will be without a loved one for three or four years.

But compared to all the drama out on the streets, CYA is one of the safest places to be.

-Tru B5

From The Beat: It is that last line of your piece that is the greatest tragedy of all. How can it be, in a country as rich and powerful as this one, that it is safer for children to be locked behind bars than to be free? What does that tell us about ourselves? And what does it say for those youngsters who, after the trauma of CYA, are made to go back to those same dangerous, drama-filled streets that put them in the Y to begin with?

Homies And Family

I feel sympathy for all my homies and family. Every time one of them is hurt, I feel they pain, and if one of my homies needs me, they know where to go. They can come stay with me, and if anything goes wrong and if they got any problems, I'm going to ride with them 'cause I know they will do the same for me, my friends and family.

RIP Jo, Mike.

-Tweety B2

From The Beat: It sounds like you show your loving side to your homies and family. What about folks you don't know, do you show them love off-top or not?

Sympathethic Ways

I had sympathy for my girlfriend when she got suspended from school. I felt someone else's compassion and pain.

I felt sorry for my next door inmate. I feel pity for a short person who will stay short for the rest of his life, which is a person I've never known in my lifetime.

-Tray B1

From The Beat: Why do you think some of the young people you're with say that they don't feel anything for anyone else? Do you believe them? Do you think all young children can feel others' pain, but that they lose that ability or choose to ignore other's feelings when they grow up? Does your short friend want to be tall?

Shot In War

I had sympathy for my brother when he went to war because he got shot in his leg. He was walking with a limp. He had to be in a wheelchair for six weeks and I was feeling sorry for him. That is my brother, you know, but now that he is walking, it's like a big weight off of my shoulder.

-No Name

From The Beat: Do you know where your brother was when he got shot? Was he in Iraq? Afghanistan? When did this happen. What does he (and what do you) think about the war in Iraq? We're glad your brother recovered.

Dope Fiends

I feel sorry for dope fiends
White stuff in they smoke screens
They come to me with hella change
Pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters
Always dressing hella tacky
Never in order

But I also feel bad
For myself for selling them that shhh
But that's all I know, selling dope
My only way of gettin' money
Besides robbing those folk

But that's life, and that's the way mine goes

-Young Robb B2

From The Beat: We feel sorry for both of you, but we think you both must address your addictions — theirs for dope and yours for easy money. How would you feel if your little brother ended up a dope fiend giving his change to another dope dealer like you? Be strong, Young Robb, change your life for you and your brother and all those sad dope fiends.

Weekly Writings

It's Been A Struggle

It's been a struggle
as I double back to day one

They said I was crazy
'cause I walked the street
day and night
wit' my gun

It was my job
But some people thought
I did it for fun

It ain't easy to explain
That's what makes my life worthwhile
That's what makes me smile
RIP, Ren and Manye-B

-Lil' Hunter B1

From the Beat: So, are you smiling when you give your RIPs to your dead homies? That's all we can think of when we read a piece like this, a tribute to a cold piece of steel responsible for so much pain. We took a large portion of this poem out because it offered nothing more than the boasts of a child who thinks carrying a gun makes him a man.

Slap Shot

I'm in the ninth grade and I start on my varsity basketball team for my high school, which is Balboa.

We were playing Lincoln High School. I did a crossover on number 10 on LHS and drove it in on him. He tried to reach in, and he slapped my shoulder and dislocated my shoulder, and that's how I got my injury.

-Devonnea B1

From The Beat: Is your shoulder healed now, Devonnea? Does it still hurt? Can you play basketball for Balboa next season? What position do you play? Did the ref call a foul on the guy who slapped your shoulder? Do you think he slapped you so hard to take you out of the game on purpose? If so, how did you handle it? Do you hope to play for the NBA someday?

Doing My Thang

What is it? It's me, Young Mont, just up in YTEC right now, doing my thing, feel me? In a few more weeks, I will be out of YTEC and off of probation.

To all in the Halls right now, man this crap on the streets is weak, feel me my ninja.

But as for me, bump this. I'm doing my thang and I am going to keep doing my thang, feel me. I will be off probation. To all up in the Hall, keep yo' head up and don't let these fake ninjas get to you. One. Stay up ninja.

-Young Mont

From The Beat: So, what's your thang? When young people write that they're going to be off probation, but they're still "going to keep doing" what they were doing, we have to wonder how long they plan to stay off probation. We hope forever!



It's So Mean

On my block homies shooting, shooting at the homies. But when it's time to ride, some die, 'cause they're trying to hold down the block. It's so mean — the block where I'm from. Some don't stick together, because of money. One side or two sides are going to push their hard line to get what they need. But my peoples do anything for the money, so I got to ride it out. Stay up.

-Lil' Clap B4

From The Beat: It must be a nightmare to watch the war for money go down on your block and watch your homies die, Lil' Clap. When you say, "I got to ride it out," what does that mean? Aren't there other youngsters from your way who don't ride it out, but do their own thing? It seems like you're just following when you should be leading — leading yourself! What's the best you can do in your situation? If there are young homies who look up to you, what do you hope to teach them? How would you feel if they got into the kind of trouble you're in because they followed your lead? Do you have any adults you can go to for advice?

Can't let nobody get into yo' mind — that's when you vulnerable...

If I Could Change The Past

I wish that I could turn back time before I got arrested. I could make the right choice before I pulled that lick. I should have the right choice because then I would be a free man instead of getting locked up, being put on probation, coming to YTEC. I wish I could have known not to do all the things I did. And now I just want to go back into time so I could stop myself.

-Jamar B4

From The Beat: We think you're spending too much time wishing for things that can't be changed, and not enough time thinking about the things you can change. When you get out of here, you will be faced with the same choices you had to face before you came into the system, so the important question is how will you make different choices this time?

Damn

Damn, once again I'm in the Halls sittin' it down for a petty warrant. Gettin' ready to go to 850 for about 58 days. But knowing a boss like me go' ride it out 'til my casket drops.

I'm in B5 ready to leave this weak-ass place. To all my ninjas that's in YTEC: Y'all be coo', finish y'all program and I'll see you when I get out.

And to all in this weak-ass Hall: I love y'all. Keep yo' heads up and I'll see y'all when I see y'all. This is Lil' Joe, and with that I'm out — chea boom!

-Lil' Joe B5

From The Beat: How many "once agains" do you think you'll be writing about. How many does it take before you handle your business so that you don't have outstanding warrants (petty or otherwise) that give the system the power over your life? We're glad for you that you have less than two months left to do, but we wonder if this is your last trip to jail — or, even worse, prison. They're waiting for you to trip up, so why don't you take your revenge by never coming back!

To The Beat

What's up, this is Estrella. Well, I just want to say thank you to all the cool-ass staff: Donna, Daniela and Keir. I just want to say thank you for all the things I have learned in your program. The Beat has helped me overcome a lot of pains and thoughts, so I just want to say thanks. One love.

-Estrella GU

From The Beat: Thank you, Estrella. We wish you all the best at your program and we can't wait to see how successful you'll be.

Never Got To Hella At Her

There was this girl who I really, really liked. I seen her smile at me every day, but she never spoke, but she always threw it up, like "What's up?" I liked the way she carried herself outside. She never gave me a chance to holla at her, though, but it's nothing. I'll get at her some day, or have some conversation with her, just to get to know her.

-Ken B4

From The Beat: We hope you get to meet this girl in the future, so that you won't always regret what might have been.

Can't Get Right

I just can't get right. I do well for so long, then I just mess up. I did well in school for so long, until ninth grade year. The first half I did fairly well. I got a 3.5 GPA. The second half it went downhill for me in school, period. I got a 0.8 for my second half, and that's the highest I ever got after that. At one point, I even got an F on one of my classes. Believe that. That's only one of my examples.

-A-Jax B4

From The Beat: Dropping from a 3.5 to 0.8 grade point average in a single year tells us that something was going on in your life. You make it sound like you have no idea why you started failing in school, but we think you must have some idea. What do you think the reason or reasons are?

A Lot Of Time I'm Not Iryin' To do

Yo', you know me, Young Tuna, holdin' it down, trying to stay on top.

Now it's 7/20/04. I just went to court today on some weak stuff. I was trying to go to Glen Mills, but they said I'm goin' to the "Y," so I'm mad as hell. But now I got to keep it up no matter what, feel me? I don't want to go, but I can't say anything. You already know how it is.

They said the least I'll get is one year and eight months, but that's a lot of time. I don't give a damn what nobody say, talking about "Do your time." It's nothing, but crap. I'm not goin' lie.

That is a lot of time that I'm not trying to do. I'm not the ninja to do it, ya' know. So holla at yo' boy when you see me on the outs, feel me?

-Yo' Boy Tuna B4

From The Beat: The one thing we don't see in this piece, Tuna, is your own responsibility for the situation you're in. We're not saying that you should go to the Y (we hate it when anyone is sent there), but we are saying that focusing only on your punishment without any focus on what you did to "deserve" it is a recipe for more violations in the future, and more commitments to other jails. We don't want you to be writing how mad you are to be locked up when you're 30, 40 or 50. Now is the time to face your own contributions to your being where you are, and now is the time to commit to changing.

Ride Alone

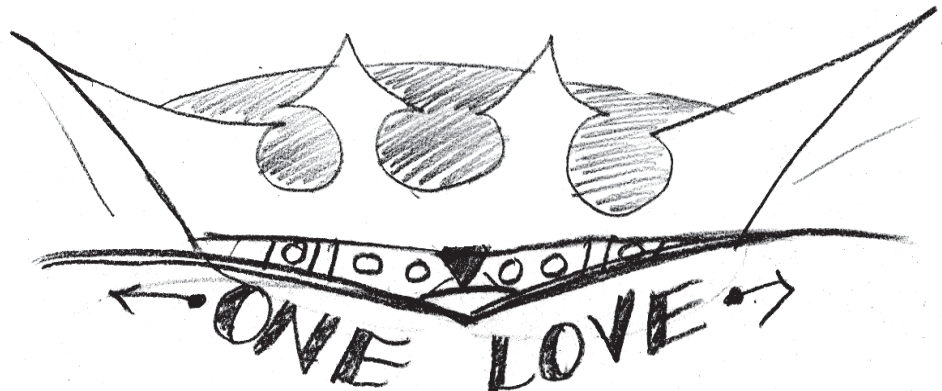
I don't really think I ever really got hurt to the point where it made a mark on my heart. I don't really put myself out there like that to let somebody hurt me. Like we can be coo' or whatnot, but if you was to cross me, it would be nothing because I really don't trust anyone that don't share my blood, and I don't really trust them.

I cannot really say I don't trust everybody who don't share my blood because I got a little trust in a chosen few, such as two of my close homies and my girl. But that's only to a certain extent, like money, toys, clothes, and my time, but that's all I trust them with.

Can't let nobody get into yo' mind — that's when you vulnerable, and we'll be writing you a piece talking about "who hurt you" and why. Ride alone and don't wait 'til you get burned to know that you don't have to put yourself in a position to get hurt.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: We're curious how well your strategy works for you, Leek. Does the fact that you don't let anyone into your mind protect you from pain? Do you hurt? What makes you hurt? (And, if you layer yourself with protection from pain, do you not also put obstacles in the way of love, of that sense of warmth that comes with being one with another person?)



Damn

Man, I been here for a long time, and today when I look up, my young ninja freakin' walk in the door. I was like, what the hell he in here for?

I can't really be mad because I am in here and I can't do nothing to him. But when I asked him what he was here for, he was like "I was holdin' it down for the block." I was like, "Do your thing bra, because I am here and I can't do nothing, so my ninja got to hold it down for me and the homies."

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: Is this just a youngster? Were you upset that he is in the Hall at such a young age? How old were you when you first came in? Do you think it would have been different if you had been out? What if you and the rest of your homies decided to be positive role models and show the youngsters how life can be if you don't get mixed up with the street life?

Turn Back Time

I wish I could turn back the hands of time and feel the love you once gave. I wish I could go back to that place where we once felt in love, them days we held each other and loving each other. We were tight and in love.

Baby, if I could turn back the hands of time, I'd do it right and won't play with your hear. Karma hurts. Look at me now. I'm here and you're over there, separate. I wish I could turn back the hands of love to that place where we fell in love 'cause I promise you this time is for reals.

-Shorty

From The Beat: This sounds like one of those regrets that you'll carry around forever. The sad truth is that none of us can turn back time, though all of us have wanted to. All you can do now is look at the past as a lesson, and let that lesson keep you from making the same mistakes in the future.

**You got to be goin'
around watching
your back all day.**

Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

Value In Suffering

I've suffered in the past and present, and there was meaning behind it. The only way I could stop the pain is to forgive and forget and move on. Yeah, you mess up, but who doesn't?

Most people suffer and it's not fair sometimes, but we give each other chances even if there were too many chances. I also think everyone deserves an extra chance so they could prove to themselves that they can do it and have a new life. We wouldn't have that much pain and suffering in us.

-Heather

From The Beat: What do you see as the value of suffering? How many chances do you think are fair, 3, 5, 10? When would you say enough is enough? How do you get rid of your pain and suffering?

Try To Change My Life

First, I'll start walking my own path and not the path that the big homies got planned for me, or the police, or the hater. It's time for the real thugs to stop following people because nobody is going to do anything for you, but yourself in there.

You're not going to get rich on the streets. Before you know it, you will be in somebody's jail. How much cash will you make before someone comes and takes your cash? Somebody on the streets or the police, dice games, your family, or your friend, or your girl. Somebody is going to get you when you're not looking. You got to be goin' around watching your back all day. I can't take that crap. To all you nobodies in the game, think before you get in.

-Ready Rich

From The Beat: Deciding to walk your own path is the beginning of becoming a man, RR. We think you've figured out some important things about your life. We hope you are able to follow through on your plan, and not let the little setbacks and pitfalls that are bound to happen set you back. Go for it!

What's Next

Have I ever felt desperate? Yeah. There's times when I sit in my room thinking about what's next, what's coming, feeling desperate. There's time when I say, "What's going to happen to me," not knowing what's coming, feeling desperate for my time to come.

Feeling desperate ain't cool. I'm desperate for my six months to go by. Feeling and not knowing. But I guess I got to keep on feeling desperate.

Well, that's all for me, take care, and keep your head up. Alrato.

-Magdalene

From The Beat: We wish we could help you with this feeling, but we know that uncertainty about the future can be a big source of stress and desperation. The only advice we can give is not to put yourself in a situation where you end up in a cage waiting for someone to tell you what's going to happen. That's advice for next time.

Who Was Here?

Every time I'm in a new environment, I always think about who was in the room and how long they were in there, especially when I was in the hall. I always think of who they was, where he/she was from, and how they got there.

-Jamar

From The Beat: Do you ever imagine a real person, with a name, a face, a life? Do you think in years to come some other unfortunate young man will be in your room wondering who was there before?

Real Rhymes

Tears of pain got me insane in the brain
Tryin' to stay free from seein' prison cells
Life can be hell, but in a cell

I'm missin' my folks

One love for my lady and that's fo' show
Tryin' to stay free from catchin' a slug
Writin' rhymes and stackin' chips

Just spittin' the real rhymes

Keepin' my butt out the jail cell.

-BI

From The Beat: We can't imagine having to dodge slugs and avoid jail cells, and all the rest that infects our streets. We're sorry you have to endure it, but we're glad that you are strong enough to do so.

Desperate For A Car

I can't remember when I ever felt desperate. But I can relate to Lil' Johnny's struggles and what he's going through. I can relate to him having no father around because I went through times like those.

I can also relate to his money situation, havin' to hustle to get money. I do remember when I was desperate to get money to get a car. I was savin' all my money. I went to sleep at my cousin's house and when I woke up, my cash was gone. I was desperate 'cause I didn't know which one of my cousins had my money. I was waitin' for them to get home. When my cousin got home, they spent all my money. I started to beat on my cousin, and started takin' all of their valuables.

-Jamar

From The Beat: It's not nice to have family stealing your money! But we're not sure wanting a car qualifies as "desperate." Now, if you couldn't eat, that's desperate. Are you and your cousins still tight, or did this tear you apart?

A Messed Up House

I remember when I first moved to this house. It was all messed up. Paint was chipping off the walls, sinks was not working, and I was like, "who was living here before us?" But when we fixed it up, it looked better. We still needed to fix it up some more, but now that it's finished up, it looks way better.

-Jamar

From The Beat: Fixing up a messed up house can be a lot like fixing up a messed up life, Jamar. It's hard work. It sometimes hurts. Lots of times you want to quit and walk away. But when it's finally done, it not only looks great, but you feel fantastic for having accomplished something major.

Ridiculous

The first thing that comes to my mind is curfew. Is there really anything I'm capable of doing after curfew that I'm not capable of doing before? I think it should be a parental discretion.

Also, I think it's ridiculous that I had all these chances and I keep on going back to the glass pipe. And to me it's all about self-image, so it's also ridiculous that the girls have to feel unacceptable if they aren't a size zero. The media brainwashes people — it's crazy.

-Kaisha

From The Beat: You kept it so real. It's a trip how big an influence the media has on us. Yet when we commit crimes, it's all our fault. Most of the time the media doesn't know what it's talking about. We know a whole lot of people who would say that a woman that's a size zero isn't attractive. Beauty's in the eyes of the beholder, so embrace yourself for who you are and behold your beauty.

Detention

When I come around this place called detention

I feel like I'm trapped and not to mention

The food here is really not that tasty

But if I was on the outs, those drugs would be wasting me.

I would look like crap, so I'm glad I'm in here

So I could look at myself sober face-to-face in the mirror

And I know once in a while I shed a tear

Because my soul, heart, and body are filled with fear.

You know what's ridiculous

Is when I act suspicious

That's why I'm here all the time

And I leave a note with this rhyme

Peace out to The Beat

Keep your head up and stay on your feet.

-Thomas

From The Beat: Are all these bad things about detention enough to keep you from getting out and going right back? We always read about how hard it is for people when they're locked up, but we also read about those who say they've been incarcerated more than once. How does this compare?

**it's also ridiculous that the girls have to feel unacceptable
if they aren't a size zero.**

We Became Friends!

When I was in fifth grade, I was in line to play Four Square, and a kid cut me in line.

So I grabbed him by the back of the neck and bashed his head against the wall. And I stomped on his face and chest, too. After that, I ran to the back of the school and hid behind the dumpster until lunch was over.

After that, I didn't see him for a month. When he finally came back, we became friends.

-Joseph

From The Beat: It sounds like a blessing, that you were forgiven and graced with friendship. Maybe you're supposed to learn a lesson — refrain from violence 'cause it might be your friend!

Dear God

When this earthly house is dissolved
Until then... Dear God

You know I will give my very best

And when I am weary

I will take a moment's rest

But not too long because I must run your race

And while I run, I will keep the faith

And yes, dear God, I will keep a smile on my face

When this earthly house is dissolved

Until then

Dear God, I will help my fellow man

Because I truly understand

I must let thy will be done

And while I run this race

I will keep the faith

And, yes Lord, I will keep a smile on my face

When this earthly house is dissolved

Until then...

I will make my earthly house a home

And my family, dear Lord, I will never leave them alone

I will run this race

I will keep the faith

And yes, dear God, I will keep a smile on my face

When this earthly house is dissolved

Until then... Dear God

I will continue to pray

That you continue to bless me in your holy way

So that my light will continue to shine

And I will never have to tell anyone that I am a Christian

Not one single time

Because Lord, I will run this race

I will keep the faith

And yes, dear God, I will keep a smile on my face

Until I leave this place

Until I can see you see the smile on my face

When this earthly house is dissolved

I will be gone from it Lord

But I won't be gone at all

And thank you, dear God

Because when this earthly house is dissolved

I will never, ever, be alone

-Red Bone

From The Beat: When did you embrace God as a part of your life? Do you think that you'll always keep God in your life? How can you teach your fellow peers about the importance of religion? Did your religion change you? How has it made you stronger? Do you follow all of His teachings or are there some that you omit? Tell us more about your God.

I Wish I Was Free In The Crazy Ghetto

I wish I was free so I could be with my family. Real talk. This shhh ain't cool, but I just got to stunt this shhh out, you feel me? Hard like a rock.

I was on the run from Camp and was running these streets. I wasn't spending no time with my family. Now they come up here to still visit me, so I give them mad respect!

I wish I was out taking care of business and holding down the 'hood. It's a war zone out there. You always gotta be on your toes. The ghetto got me crazy.

Until next time, stay up, one love, for life.

-Young Dru

From The Beat: If you were free, would you spend time with your loving family or would you go and kick it in the hood? Get your priorities straight 'cause they sideways right now.

If I Get Out

if i get out i'm going to college

for my last two years

so i can finish school quicker

then get a job

so i can help

my mom out with the rent

so she can save money and go places

so she can have fun

with the time she has on this earth

my grandmother and grandfather

-Kevin

From The Beat: Your head and your heart are lined up straight. Now if you follow through, it's all good — no, it's great!

The Life Styles I Live

i go through a lot of life styles

in between the years in my life

so the problems i go through

ain't nothing to the things

i will have to experience

if i keep going down the same road

things won't be great

they will be big worse for me

so if i don't stop at this young age

i will be young and lost

i guess that's how i will pay

the cost if i don't want to be the boss

-Lil' Pooh

From The Beat: While you're going through life styles, why not try out being square for a while? It pays with freedom. Don't resign yourself to incarceration or institutionalization.

Hurts so bad

It hurts so bad when them doors can't open no more,
or when you take a life and no one knows how you feel
but God.

Or when you miss, your life go past you and you can't see it.

Now that's got to hurt, so bad.

-Shim

From The Beat: Yup, Shim, there are a lot of things, especially while in the Hall that hurt. All you can do is find peace within yourself. Your life only passes you up if you let it. If you decide what your life is about, you have the freedom. Your mind doesn't have a locked door. You have the power to open that door. Find that freedom in yourself. Whether it is through learning new things, showing compassion to others, or finding peace with God. You have the power.

Horrible Days

I have horrible days while I'm locked down. I thought about killing myself one time as I was blacking out on my bed.

I have nightmares about getting shot up and stabbed to death. I go to church but that don't work I just try to take it one day at a time an' ask God to keep me strong.

-Trying

From The Beat: This is a very sad piece to read. Whoever you are, we wish we could help you in getting the support and confidence you need to pick yourself up. So, how can you make the best of your time in the Hall? How can you make your days productive, especially when you are free?

**I believe
our
Father
above is
the only
person
who
helps us
with our
way of
life.**

Wannabe A Poem

Sup man? This Chris from Hayward

and let me break this down.

I'ma try to write a lil' poem:

I wish upon a star,

wishing where the homies are?

If they're still locked down from above on us,

like they said, they were pulling licks

To just try to impress a stupid trick.

Then, falling for the police

And coming back into this boring pit,

But I am the one that's holding onto the strings,

just like a puppet. Try to drink,

But that's all some stupid ass shhh to be doing

'Cause I'm going to be that crazy mofo,

Edward Scissorhands, and cut the strings

'Cause they can't hold onto me forever,

but I'm out this place.

I'm gonna pour my liquor out and say later.

Y'all 'bout to be out this place, and to those in here, up in 150-

Crew, be safe and keep your heads up, Peace, I'm out.

-Culero

From The Beat: Do you always want to be in jail thinking about your other homies who are also in jail or dead? What kind of life is that? How can you make a life for yourself away from the streets and jail? Cut the strings of incarceration now.

Way of Life

I believe our Father above is the only person who helps us with our way of life. If you pray and go to church, He will help you. If you believe in turning to Him when you need help, He will help you. So if you will follow me in the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever; amen."

-Bilal

From The Beat: Do you know the Serenity Prayer? "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Try repeating it over and over when you're tripping.

June's Court

I went to court the other day, and to tell you all the truth, I am not going back to Camp! I can't blame that on no one but me.

My mom was telling me that I have two choices, but I am not going to tell you what my choices are — sorry! But I'm praying for one of them.

To all at Camp: Be cool! Don't run, be cool and don't do nothing dumb!

-Lil' June

From The Beat: It's got to be hard. You were so close to finishing at Camp, before you let the frustration of extra time get to you (plus getting smoked out that weekend didn't clear up your thinking). Wherever you go, we hope you get beyond "keep it gangsta" — and stay chill and clean! Yanawmean?

What's Up Beat

well it's kinda been
goin' good so far in my life
i just wish i was at home
instead of being at camp
right now i just want to go home
every day and kick it
with my brothers and all my potnas
but i'd like to thank god
for bringin' me this far
i'd also like to give every samoan in the hall
up's — and stay up too

-Lil' Samoa

From The Beat: It's cool that you offer God your words of thanks, but you need to show your gratitude with your acts! Don't just go back to what you used to do. God gave you another chance to do good.

My Main Female

we have known each other
for a long time
and a couple of days later
this girl is mine
we been together
for about three years
even though i put her through
some fears
by going to the hall
about three or four times
and when i came out
she still was mine
she was there
when i came out
she still was mine
she was there
when i needed her
i was there
when she needed me
and if you know what
i'm saying
someday you'll see

-Lil' Joey

From The Beat: So now it's up to you. You've got the gratitude, but can you come through? Spare her the pain of your coming back to lock-up ever again!

Rest In Peace

Lil' Jerm
Mikey
De'Shan
Lil' Clarence
G-Baby

-Alive today

From The Beat: Are these deaths gang-related? Does rain fall from the sky? Why can't we learn before more have to die?

**I am doin' time
for what wasn't
my fault.**

Hood Talk

I started living in the 'hood in 1997. My crazy years started in the year 2000. I started beating up rivals, and anyone else that disrespected my 'hood.

The 'hood is like everything to me. Without the 'hood, I don't think my life be completed. The reason I love my 'hood so much, is because all my homies show me love! And they respect me for the way I am.

Anyway, just because I am a 'hood fella doesn't mean I don't spend time with my family. I'm talking about Moms, Dad, and my older sister that loves me. I love my family, because no matter what I do, they will always be there for me.

But back to my 'hood "family" — living in the 'hood ain't no joke, because you got fools trying to beat you up or kill you. But that's the way gangstas roll. So to all, keep your head up and stay making money and stay smashing on fools that hate.

-Lil' Weezel

From The Beat: You need to separate out that love of your 'hood family' from rolling like a gangster — or you'll be banging in prison, missing your mom, dad, and older sister. But get a job to make your money, quit riding around like a fool, and you can be there for your loved ones at home — and help your 'hood, too!

In Our World

life growing up in the hood
is tough sometimes
but this is the life
our parents brought us into
police itching for a catch
searching for miles and miles
up and down our streets
and all the homeboys
stoned on a mission
hittin' corners in our monte's
tryin' to survive day by day
in our world —

-Tripador

From The Beat: "Stoned on a mission" is a description of addiction not a vision of life. You're old enough to demand more than in-and-out the system's revolving door, all right?

Sympathy

i don't have no sympathy
for no one but the people
who show me love
i would like to have
sympathy for a lot more
people than that but
i can't have or show
no respect to anyone

-Lil' Samoa

From The Beat: You don't, you'd like to, but you can't. Why not?

Payroll

i'm gonna get out soon
this is ya folks kasper
from the fremont streets
couple of more weeks
i'm out this camp
no more hv's
no more having to ask
to go to the bathroom or nothin'
back to the woods
just smokin' big purps
poppin' big thizzles
you know how we do it

-Kasper

From The Beat: Props on doing your program, but your plan after release is weaker than weak. You're not even putting it on a sidebar but dead-center. And June says he wants to leave the marijuana and ecstasy alone. How can you help him along?

Avoid Problems

What's up! This Young Gato, chillin' here in the Hall. Well, this week I'm going to tell you some ways you could avoid trouble when not needed.

Me, I always get in some shhh, but that's just the way I live my life. In the hood, there is a lot of trouble if you really want it — there's always death and placca around the corner! Maybe if I get a job and try to go to school, I could avoid some of the problems I come across.

I'm always going to hold it down, and whenever the homies call, I'm going to ride. But if I get a job, and go to school, I could avoid these cops always taking me to jail. When I get out, I'm going to work on it. For now, I can't do shhh.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: What you can do, in the Hall and wherever they send you, is work on your heart and your mind. Writing can be a most important tool. Make a list of all the unnecessary problems you've come across, and write about each one. Then make a list of the people you've hurt as a result, like your family members, and write about how and for how long (and put yourself on the list, too). Forget "if I get a job" — make up your mind to get one. Then the only questions remaining are when, where and what. If you get serious about it, even locked up, we bet you could find a job waiting for you when you get out. But for you, the real work starts on the inside — inside your own heart and mind! Do it.

**Maybe if I
get a job and
try to go to
school, I could
avoid some of
the problems I
come across.**

My Way Out From Juvenile Hall

It was my way out from Juvenile Hall. I got out and I saw my friends and family. They were waitin' for me at the door. I remember the first thing I said to them, and it was that I would never come back to the Hall.

Well, I guess I didn't keep my word, and I ended up coming back. I came back because this girl had a restraining order against me, and I went into the wrong store. I didn't know she worked there, but she called the police on me. So I had to come back to the Hall.

I went to court on the twenty-seventh of July, and they told me that I was makin' phone calls to her — sayin' bad things. But the thing about it, is that they're wrong. I don't have time to be playin' on people's phones.

They also told me that someone placed a fire in their home; and they tried to say it was me! But how could I do that if I was in the Hall at the time? They will never know the truth though, because they don't even want to hear my side of it.

So I am doin' time for what wasn't my fault. But it's okay, because God will get them. He knows the truth, and He also knows what will happen. But one day in my life, I will forgive, because everyone deserves to be forgiven — and if I don't forgive, God will get me.

So, everyone, watch what you do, because you just never know what could happen. Always,

-Ja'laya

From The Beat: We guess you mean, "Watch what you do so that you never get into a situation with a restraining order against you." Because from that point on, all that happened to you was totally outside your control. Keep your head up. The truth will out, and you'll go home. God bless.

It Ain't Over

It ain't over 'cause God made souljas
He put us in the field so we can run from the rollers
Ridin' hella fast like a baby in a stroller.
If I give up — I might as well pull over
But I'm a son of God so you know I'm a soulja
I blow on sticky purple old school hot douja
But I'm livin' this life so I know it ain't over.
RIP Ray Ray

-Boog Money

From The Beat: If you are a soulja for God, which of His teachings do you follow? What kind of God do you believe in? When did you embrace God and how has your life and mentality changed since?

Street Soldiers

Getting locked up or dying by these commandments of the 'hood:

1. Thou shalt not snitch
2. Thou shalt handle thy business
3. Thou shalt do what thy gotta do
4. Thou shalt get girls
5. Thou shalt be no punk
6. Thou shalt put in work
7. Thou shalt get thy respect
8. Thou shalt carry a gat
9. Thou shalt recruit
10. Thou shalt be down for thy set/hood/crew
11. Thou shalt be down for thy homeboy: right or wrong

Or... are you living by these?

Rules For Living:

There is nothing more valuable than an individuals life (you can never kill an enemy)
Respect comes from within
Change begins with the individual
A friend will never lead you to danger (a healthy person stands alone)

Are you avoiding these?

Risk factors (No-No's)

1. Destructive language
2. Guns
3. Drugs
4. Alcohol
5. Attitude "I don't give a...!"
6. Negative view of women
7. Fearship vs. friendship
8. Material values over family
9. Destructive family/environment

He who is committed to eliminating violence in his life and community, one who reduces the risk factors, deals with his anger, fear and pain, and adopts the rules for living.

-Danario and Omega Boys Club

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that so many young people learn the right way to live when it's way too late. Which lifestyle do you plan to live by for the rest of your life? Which lifestyle is easier to live by? Where will the first ten street commandments take you? Thanks for sharing the Street Soldiers rules for living!

Dreams

Lately I been dreamin' a lot, so much shhh runnin' through my head, sometimes I even dream I was dead, but I ain't trippin' because we live to die in these shady ass streets in Oakland.

But some of these ninjas ain't no mess so they want to see me rest in peace, but shhh hopefully it ain't my time to be deceased from these streets. But if it's my time hopefully these ninjas quit hatin' and let me shine until it's my day.

I got so much shhh to say I just can't get it off my chest because so much shhh on my mind — I really can't drop all my lines.

RIP Lil' LT, Big Dorn, Lil' C, Tot, Lil' Dan, Lil' Mikey Lil' Steve and Lil' Molly one day.

-Lil' Molly

From The Beat: Well we're always listening so when you wanna get it all off your chest — we're here. Why do you always talk about someone hating on you? Why do you fill your mind with hate? Do you see yourself embracing love — ever?

Thinkin' A Lot

Lately I been thinkin' a lot,
So much shhh runnin' through my head
But sometimes I wish it would stop,
Shhh so many ninjas want to see me drop.

I can't do shhh but do what
I got to do to make it stop,
But sometimes I just want to fail.

-Lil' Molly

From The Beat: Nobody wants to fail but so many of us can't help ourselves. You have to help yourself 'cause ain't shhh free. Grab a hold of God soon... or you just might fail!

Sympathy

Well, what's crackin' Beat? This the homie Green Eyes 'bout to write on this topic real quick. So check it out!

Well the people I feel sympathy for is my little sister because every time my dad goes back to the "pen" she's always askin' "where's her dad"? I feel sympathy for my little sister because I don't like seein' her worry about shhh and I love her!

I don't feel sympathy for my rivals though because it either them or me and I ain't goin' nowhere because I got to back up my family and my homeboys to the fullest! Feel me?

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: You know what? Right now your little sister is saying, "where's my brother?" Just a little something to think about...

In My Mind...

Lately I been thinkin' a lot,
So much shhh runnin' through my head,
A couple nights ago when I woke up
I thought I was dead,
Room black as hell,
Sometimes I wish the judge would let me bail
But shhh the only thing he want to do
Is go to this place called hell
He even told me he want' me to fail.

-Lil' Molly

From The Beat: The best revenge is success so think of ways you can prove the judge wrong. How can you show her that you deserve a second chance? Break the chains of incarceration...

CYA Bound

I'm going to CYA because a female and my cousin snitched on me. Yeah, now I'm going to CYA for 18 months. It's a shame though my own blood snitched on me. The girl I loved played me like a fool. But when I get out I'm gonna see her. But she did me scandalous though. The girl that I love and trust and gave my soul to, she took it and ripped it apart.

I ain't gonna lie I still love her. All because of a robbery she coulda said nothing'. They wouldn't have put her in jail. But your tongue is your worst enemy. Now I'm going to CYA for 12-18 months. Now I'm locked up kickin' it with The Beat every week I know what I did was bad. Maybe it's a good thing I'm in jail to learn from my mistakes.

-Danny Boy

From The Beat: What makes you think she even wants to see you? Obviously some bad stuff went down, and as much as you loved her, she wasn't feeling you in the same vein. You're right this could be a good thing, this time out from freedom could have saved your life from further destruction. Now is the time to better your skills as a writer and a reader, and to learn how to live your life righteously.

I got so much shhh to say I just can't get it off my chest because so much shhh on my mind

In The Beginning

Being stuck between. Being stuck in between, halfway, in the middle is real bad. Not knowing which way to turn after you have made the wrong turn.

Making a wrong turn can put you right back in the beginning. Being in the beginning only puts new crap over old crap. I have learned being in the beginning only helps me. Starting all over. Making a new path without any big animals, beasts in my way. I am starting a new path and I will not let the devil bring me down.

With God's help. The lord is in Jesus and Jesus is in me. It feels good to have something so good something so powerful, something so sweet in me. I am in the beginning, and I know I will have hard times but as long as I know that one day God will come and rescue me!

Ha! Ha! Now what can you do? You're helpless! And you will not bring me down! Not ever again.

-Damia

From The Beat: Damia, having faith is a powerful feeling. You know that God has your back. Anything you do will have his/her support. You like beginnings, well that is always the best place to start. Everyday can be a new beginning. Start each day with a list of things you want to accomplish, and do it! No one can stop you!

Take Care of Business

It hurts to be in this weak unit, thinkin' about my peoples and all the money I can be getting on the outs right now. We got funk on the streets but we still go to sleep, that's from my ninja Dee, spittin' heat.

I got to get up outta here so I can get back on my mission. I ain't gon' stress myself because I just learned a new hustle and when I get up outta here, I can do nothin' but bubble.

If you ain't tryin' a get money, get up out my way. Young Mighty Mouse, that's all I'm gon' say.

-Mighty Mouse

From The Beat: Mighty Mouse, what is this new hustle? Something legit? Hopefully. What is an honorable hustle to you? Is honor important to you? You are in the Hall right now, what is the most important thing in your life at this moment? Making money? When you have all the money you want, then what? 50 Cent says, "Get rich or die trying". Is this your philosophy? This idea comes out of desperation. Are you so desperate? Learn. Look back in history. The most successful people in this world are educated people. The hustle is knowledge. You're a smart cat, don't be desperate, be smart. Take care of business legitly!

**you will not bring me down!
Not ever again.**

Tears I'm Back (Part 2)

Listen to my pain
To anyone who hears this
This is a soldier's tale
A time when a ninja like me
Done been through jail
Served time in hell
My fair share of tears has been shed
I have spilled all the blood
I have bled
There is no more fear
For my dear baby's mother
The mother of my soon to be born son
Will have all the things he'll need
Everything I get
He will own
So as I get out of jail
She will too
But to those who think they love
Please do have a second thought.
Everyone I'm back.

-Lil' Jepeabo

From The Beat: Lil' Jepeabo, you sound like you gonna be a good father. You've been through a lot. What have you learned in life that you will share with your son? Share with us some of your life wisdom. How do you plan to give your son everything? Do you have a plan? Teach us.

Sympathy

I've never really had sympathy for anyone but my family and some friends, so sympathy really doesn't apply to me as far as if someone did something wrong, but if someone died or left someone I'd probably have sympathy for them.

-Ashton Adogg

From The Beat: It's kinda funny that generally we cannot feel sympathy for those we don't know. Do you think that is a good thing? Do you feel like anyone has sympathy for you, for your situation? Maybe it takes for us to experience a certain kind of pain to recognize it, when someone else goes through it, then we can feel sympathy. What do you think?

**No one taught me
how to be a father,
I taught my own
self how to be a
father in life.**

Nothing I Can Do

The last time I was locked up was about a few years ago. I did about a year in a group home and after that I was doing cool. I never committed another crime after that because I rather stay out than be in a box.

One night I left my house not knowing anything when two cops stopped me and said I robbed someone when I didn't. Of course they didn't believe me but there was nothing I can do about it.

-Saephanh

From The Beat: Sometimes things happen, that we cannot do anything about. Well you are in the Hall now, so what can you do? It must be frustrating. You might as well find something to do while you are in your "box". Push-ups and reading seems to be on top of the list of productive things to do. What do you think?

Sympathy

Well I have no sympathy for no one, you always have to keep your chin up even through the hard times and sorrow. You always have to keep your game face on or else some 'hood cats from another spot will try to jack you for everything and I mean everything. Peace. I have to go youngsters.

-Orozco

From The Beat: Are you always this hard on people? Are you always this hard on yourself? Have you ever told someone, "It's gonna be all right." That is a form of showing sympathy.

Live My Life And My Family Life

I don't like being in this place because I have to live some of my life in juvenile hall. It is not like when you have to be stressing.

In this place, it doesn't hurt to some people, but to someone like me it hurts, in the inside. Because I have a daughter and a baby mama in life. Because it is family, take a good responsibility of taking care of my daughter. Like when I was little in life. I grew up without a dad in my life.

No one taught me how to be a father, I taught my own self how to be a father in life. I'm a going to give my daughter the most respect in her life and my baby mama the most respect in her life. Because I am strong enough to do that in our life. I have a job to take care of my family. Just like my mom taught me to do.

-Vernon

From The Beat: Vernon, good for you! Take that responsibility. You're a good daddy. So what are you going to do now? How can you make sure that you don't return to the Hall, once you are released? Just keep your mind on your family, and you'll be fine.

Change

Change is hard, feel me? I'm gon' keep it real with y'all who want to understand.

See we all get out and say we ain't coming back or we're going to change, because jail ain't it. Well? On mamas, you know when you get out, you'll go back. Not everybody, but 90% of us go back to do what we do best. Don't say you gon' change 'cause you ain't keepin' it real.

-Bandits

From The Beat: Yeah, there are a high percentage of y'all folks in the Hall that continue to come back. But, it's important to show support. Someone wanna talk about how they wanna change, well, we think that we should support that. Saying it is the first step. What we would like to see is more folks taking that second step. Make a plan, ask for help. Make power moves. Do something. Hustling is only what folks do best, when they don't know anything else. Learn a new trade. Be a hustler, BUT, hustle as a businessman, as a stockbroker, as an artist. You can be whatever you want. Yeah, it's hard, but you'll only succeed if you try.

**I only left you in words
but not in spirit.
I'm back**

I'm Back

To all those who have missed my essence
And the presence of me
And now I'm back to adorn thee
For those who are
New and old I am thee who they
Once called Pastor now I am Lil' Jepeabo.
I apologize for the missing in action,
But I had business to handle,
Lil' Mama, do not be angry
But indeed be happy
For which you shall find true love,
I only left you in words but not in spirit.
I'm back

-Lil' Jepeabo

From The Beat: Your back? Back to the Hall, or back to the Beat? Tell us about your name change? Are you comin' from a different perspective now? What changed? You're back. Give us a new introduction, who are you now?

**True Poetry (a real friend)**

If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't know what to do!
When I didn't have no one to turn to
You were there
Even if you felt like,
How much I can bare.
No one can do what you do.
It will always be a dozen,
But not one like you!

I realized that you were more than a mother and a friend
When I turn my back you were still there to the end
And when I thought the people I betrayed you for
You were down.

When the game plan failed and all the players were gone
You was still around!

That's why I could never let you fall today!
Because when it was yesterday
You still stood up! When tomorrow comes
Know you will be there like today!
There's no other who can love like you do!
That's why I love you!

-Marisa

From The Beat: You obviously have a good relationship with your mom. She is also a friend. She has been loyal to you. And you are down for her. Share with us some memories. How did your bond with your mom get so strong? How does she feel about you being in the Hall?

Why You Can't Relate To Me

Why you can't relate to me is because you ain't been through what I've been through
Why you can't relate to me is because the life I lived and what I've did — nobody knows except my bros and a couple of my homies!

Why you can't relate to me is because of the way I was brought up.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Many people feel that no one can relate to them, but as you get older and wiser you will realize that you're not much different than a lot of people out there.

Confused In Love

I think I'm in love
With someone I just met
My feelings are so strong
I'm tangled in a net

I'm trying to straighten things out
So I'm not so confused
But where should I start?

His touch? His smell?
His look? His style?
It feels if my heart
Can go pumping for miles.

But where should I start?
Everything about him
Comes straight from the heart.

Should I start on the future?
Should I start in the past?
Or should I start from
The memories that will forever last?

But how do I know
If I'm truly in love?
Should I feel as strong
As the heavens above?
Or could it be I'm just confused in love?

-Baby D

From The Beat: All of us can relate to the feelings you describe in this piece — the simultaneous excitement and insecurity of a new crush. How do you determine whether or not you're truly in love? What do you want from a relationship?

I Hate Listenin'

I wish I was out doin' my own thang, no carin' about what a person thinks. I wish I could wake up to a nice blunt to relieve me from all my stress that a ninja has on his chest. I wish my time will go past real fast to which I would not think about what's happenin' on the outs.

My time here has been hell because I hate listenin' to other people that don't mean nothin' to me. But I'm out. One love, RIP Ant, Shoddy, Lil' Dre.

-Young Quis

From The Beat: How do you know people don't mean anything to you if you don't listen to them? Maybe if you lightened up about that, you'd feel a little less like you were in hell. We're not sure how we would handle the stress of being in your shoes, but we think we'd try to let the little things go so we could concentrate on the big picture.

Wishing

I wish I was in the outs
I wish I was with my family
I wish I was in my car
I wish I was with my mom
So I can spend more time with her
I wish I was with my brothers
I miss my brothers because
We do everything together
I miss a lot of things so I wish I was out.

-Phatboy

From The Beat: There are wishes and there are wishes. When someone says, "I wish I'd win the lottery," we know that's like a daydream. It won't ever happen. But when someone says, "I wish I was with my family," we know that's more than a daydream, that's an achievable goal. The question we have is what are you going to do when you get your wish? Will it be enough to keep you home with your loved ones so that you won't have to write about them from behind four walls. We hope so. We wish it so.

19 More Days...

19 more days straight kickin' it
Working up on my game straight spittin' it
'Bout to be free, my script I'm flippin' it
You know I celebrate with a 40 I'm sippin' it
Can't wait to be back in my town just chillin'
That first rush of freedom man, is one in a million
Postin' at Jenny's or my new place
I'm lit, takin' blunts straight to face
Only got probation for 90 more days
Then it's all good, doing things my ways
I know what you're thinkin', but I'm stayin' out of jail
No more stupid shhhh, I ain't tryin' to fail
No more stressin', I like a simple life
I'll be 50 years old, smoking weed with my wife

-Rocheleau

From The Beat: Even though you assure us that you won't be coming back to jail, we have to express a little fear for you. First, we sure hope you're able to avoid the 40s and the blunts at least as long as your on probation. (The quickest way back here is to test dirty.) But what really worries us is your belief that once you get off probation "it's all good." Just a reminder that maturity brings many responsibilities, and meeting them is sometimes just plain hard. That's true for everybody, so it will be true for you, too. We hope you're prepared for that reality.

A Hope And A Prayer

I wish I was home
Sleeping on bed
Thinking about fun times.

I wish I was not here
Being controlled by staff
And letting them have the last laugh.

I wish I was with my friends
Just kickin' and chillin'
And having a happy feelin'.

I wish I was in a better situation
In my school, having a better concentration
Living without hesitation.

I wish God can help me out
Because I pray every night, thinking about moms.
Now she's not in my sight.

-Big Rex

From The Beat: How badly do you wish you were not here? Badly enough to sacrifice some of the things you do that lead you here? If it is true that God helps those that help themselves, how are you going to help yourself to stay out of this situation?

No Mercy

Why I never show pity or mercy — the reason why is because people ain't willing to do the same.

-Rhino

From The Beat: It's sad that no one's shown you mercy, but if everyone followed your thinking, we'd all be waiting for someone else to be coo' with us before being coo' with them — a stalemate of mercy that would never be broken. It's gotta start somewhere, with someone.

Not A Lot To Wish For

I wish I was back in my 'hood
Runnin' shhhh up to no good
People talkin' shhhh
I wish they would
Don't got a lot to wish for
Except to be back in the 'hood

-Steven

From The Beat: Wishing that people would talk shhhh sounds like someone looking for a fight. We have no doubt that you can get your wish; but we think if you do, you'll be writing from here or another lockup wishing, wishing, wishing... Beyond the block and the 'hood, do you ever wish for anything bigger?

Awake But Tired

In the morning, I can't wait for the staff to play music so I can catch the beat that motivates me to wake from my sleep.
At that time I must awake to start the beginning of my day.
It's like listening to my favorite song trying to learn the lyrics but singing everything wrong.
It takes time to get the words right.
It takes time to resist doing wrong with all my might
They say that a loser never wins and a winner never quits
I'm just tired of doing the same stuff.

-Lil' D

From the Beat: We don't blame you for being tired, and we wonder what you plan to do about it. If you're saying that making the choices that will keep you out of jail is hard, we agree. But then, being in jail is hard, too. So, which is harder? If you go out and come back, then we guess you've answered that question. On the other hand, if you go out and don't come back, you've also answered the question — and greatly expanded your options.

Change Everything

I wish I was at home,
I wish I was not in jail.
I wish I could change everything I did.
I wish I was in the house I was in before I was here
I wish I was going home now
I wish I was going to court.

-Marshall

From The Beat: What are your wishes for when you get home? We understand wishing to be out of here (we would too), but unless you do some planning for the steps you're going to take when you get home, you'll soon find yourself facing all the same temptations and pitfalls that got you here to begin with. Wishing is important, but without planning, it's only daydreaming.

A Second To Think

Every day when I come out, I watch the clock
As the old wise tale, hickory dickory dock.
I often wonder when it's my time what story I would tell.
Would it be good, bad, or would I say, "What the hell?"
This place that I'm in is also tight."
It nerves my vision to try to do right
But temptations is always in my mind
And its acts always keep me doing time.

-No Name

From The Beat: Are these the kind of temptations you can turn your back on? If you knew that acting on that temptation was a definite ticket back to the Hall, would you act on it? If not, then it's clear you can control your choices. There will always be temptations. The trick is learning how to say no when you have to say no.

Smother They Heads

Staff think they hard when they be givin' us hours. I got dropped to a one-step for cussin' out staff.

Some staff are okay and some staffs I just want to beat the hell out of. If a older man was talking crazy to me if I was out, I would've beat the hell out of him with a bat till I bash his head in.

-Ruthless

From The Beat: Oh, come on, Ruthless. Even though we sympathize with your frustration at some staff, do you really think beating someone's head is a solution? Is it more likely to solve a problem or cause a lot more? We're not saying you don't have a right to express your anger when staff treats you unfairly, but how you respond to that unfairness is a measure of how mature you are. Threatening to beat someone's head in with a bat tells us that you're not ready to deal with adults as an adult. (Just because some staff also don't act like adults doesn't excuse your own childish behavior.) So, as harsh as this sounds, grow up!

It Sucks

I've been coming in and out of the Hall for a long time since the age of ten, and I missed a lot of my life. I seen my boys come and go to the high sky. I seen my boys get shot on the street and seen people that are addicts. It sucks.

My big brother was locked up for two years in San Quentin. He is like me because he was in the same seat that I'm in. He went to CYA at the age of fifteen. My life is not good. I did a lot of stuff that I did not want to do in my life. It sucks.

That's what you get when you're in the game. Like I said, my life wasn't good. I was close to dead on the street. I got stabbed one time and it sucks!

I pray to God to pull the plug on me because I think I am not supposed to live.

-Shrek One

From The Beat: What you've experienced is truly terrible, and we wish we could undo it for you. But nobody can do that. But we can tell you how much we disagree with your conclusion! If God put you on the earth, then how could it be that you're not supposed to live? Maybe the question isn't whether you're supposed to live or not, but how you're supposed to live, and what you're supposed to live for. We can't answer those questions for you (even though we have strong feelings about what we hope your answers will be). You can't know the future, Shrek One (no one can), so don't be so fast to want the end to come. It will come soon enough. In the meantime, how can you make better choices to avoid the life you describe — and avoid coming to places like this?

What Makes Lamei Smile . . .

My mama of course! Getting my home passes and kickin' it wit' my home girl. Feel me?

I miss makin' money in the town . . . that type of shhh makes me smile. Also, I ain't gon' forget 'bout my homies from Daly City and South San Francisco! They hella coo' — we be gettin' bent and just postin' it up at the parks or in the 'hood.

What really makes Lamei smile is drinking sometimes or smokin' wit' my "friends." Feel me, I don't know what else to say besides ninjas need to see what's up, 'cause I'm pretty coo' if you get to know me . . . feel me?

Oh, and one more thing — I ain't fake to all them fools readin' my shhhh, aight? Wit' and X and O, I'm out like woah!

-Lamei

From The Beat: In your last piece you wrote about how much you hurt, and how much you've done wrong. In this one, you write about things that seem to put you at risk for feeling more of that hurt — getting drunk and high, kickin' it, risking more time in the Hall. You also throw out a line in here flirting with the fellas, who you've also been done wrong by so many times in the past. Finally, you lash out against others who label your work fake. How can you begin to find the things in yourself with can't be taken down by others' words and criticism? How can you stay on the outs, away from the things that have dragged you down in the past?

Being Wit' You

I love the way you make me feel
When I'm hurt, you help me heal
These feelings that I can't explain
I love to hear you call my name
When we met, it wasn't a game
Ever since then, I haven't been the same
You need to stop

When will you realize that the streets are not for you?
I try and try again, but I don't seem to have a breakthrough
I love you so much
You need to stop and see this
Our relationship may be bigger if you would listen to me.

-TrusGurl

From The Beat: We end up cutting a lot of love pieces, but this one's got a message that we think a lot of other Beat readers can learn from. More than just being about love, this piece is about how the actions of one person can affect another, and how your love is strong enough that you're trying to get him to change. What do you think you can do to help him change? If he's not willing to change, is there a point at which you think it will be better for you if you leave him?

I'm Out

What's up Beat? This is Indio 'bout to drop some words down. I've been in here for six months, and there have been good times and bad times. Since I've been in here, I lost a friend who got shot to death. Also, a good friend of mine got sent to YA.

There have been times in here when I've gotten in trouble for gang-related activities, and it seems that staff can't trust any of the homeboys. There are a couple that do, like Ms. G, Mr. G, Lynch. They do extra things to help us out.

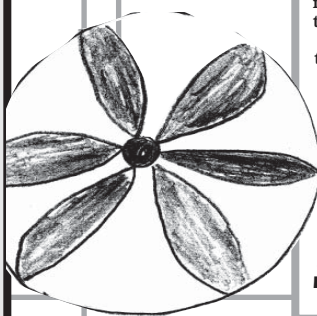
I've been told that I'm going to County on my birthday. I ain't trippin', though, 'cause I know I'll make it in there. One thing to all the homeboys in the Bay: we must all push, pull, and strive, even when we're going through hard times. I'm a prison shot, but I'm trying to go to CYA to be with Boxer, to kick it like we used to in here.

Oh yeah, I can't forget Oso. What's up bro'? You'll probably be gone by the time this is out, but I just wanted to tell you thanks bro', for watching over me. I'm gonna miss you bro'.

Last, and for all, take care, and keep your head up high. Much love and respect.

-Indio

From The Beat: Of course we're happy you're getting out of here, Indio — and we'll miss your writing — but what you write tells us that you're in for a lot more prison experience, and not the kind you can skate over easily. The next stops aren't as nice as the Hall. Maybe you can "bang to the fullest" as a slave of the system, but the world you'll be banging in will be very small and enclosed. You've heard all this before, Indio, so we won't lecture you on things you don't believe. But we'll say it one last time: you're too valuable to let someone else define your life so narrowly. The world is out there for you to discover (and believe us, you haven't discovered it yet), so it hurts us to see that you are so eager to continue doing the same stuff that brought you here. It's your life, Indio, and we hope you get to live it in freedom. Whatever happens, though, keep writing The Beat and let us know.



These Walls

As a 16-year-old from Redwood City
Stuck in the four white walls
Trying to fight me with seven bars on my window
The four white walls always trying to bring me down
Making my stay longer
Making it seem like I been here for five years
When it's only been one year
Having to start my time all over again
Going to camp, waiting to go
But it seems the dirty walls want me to stay here
Going insane in this room
Thinking of my family who left to me to Mexico
Can't talk to no one, cant see no one.

-Juice

From The Beat: You can talk to us; you can see us... We feel the frustration in your words — the waiting, the walls, the loss of family. All these things are what jail is about, whether we like it or not. There's really no advice we can give you except to keep your head up, don't let the walls drive you crazy, do your program at Camp, and get the hell out of the system! (For good!)

I'm Out

Well, check it out. This is my last week in the Hall. I have been coming in and out of this place for five years. Well, when I get out, this time I'm gonna be off probation, so that means I'm gonna have a fresh start.

It's gonna be hard for me to stay out of trouble. When I get out, I'm gonna try my hardest to keep myself out of trouble. When I get out, I'm gonna be 18, so that means that if I get myself into any trouble with the cops, then I will have to go to County, and I am not trying to go to County.

Another reason that it's gonna be hard for me when I get out is because I'm from San Bruno and I have a lot of problems with people, and when I see those people, I'm not just gonna tell them that I don't want any problems with them because then they're just gonna think that I'm some punk, and that's one thing I ain't, feel me? And I don't want to move because I have to watch out for my two little brothers because the people that I have problems with might try to mess with my little brothers, but once my little brothers are done with high school, I'm gonna try to move away.

That's all I have to say. Oh yeah, I want to say R.I.P. to my cousin Daniel.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: We feel you — it will be tough — but we're not quite convinced by the "try my hardest" line. At a certain point, trying your hardest will mean making it work, whatever you've gotta do — including walking away from beef even if some fool thinks you're a punk. To keep it real, being called a punk a small price to pay for freedom. What are you willing to do to stay out? How will you make sure that you stay out? Your brothers need you, not just for protection, but as an example of how to make it.

I Need A Real Man . . .

Ever since I was a young teen, I've been messin' up and kickin' it wit the wrong ninjas! Feel me? That ain't coo', know what I mean?! I have kicked it wit so-called gang bangers and thugs, feel me? Name it, I've been around those type of "men." And finally, when I met this one guy, I just had to get locked up!

Man, I'm hella mad. But anyways, like I was sayin', I hella want to have a real "man" in my life, someone who ain't playin' games, and who's real Feel me? Well, until next time, I'm out!

-Lamei

From The Beat: What makes a real man? How will you be able to determine whether someone's comin' at you real or if he's going to play you? How can you deal with the challenges you face first, getting yourself up and out of the system, so that when that real man comes calling you'll be there for him?

Sympathy

The only people that I have sympathy for, is for all the females out there who have been victims of rape. That's a low and cowardly thing to do to satisfy their controlling needs, or pathetic sexual urges. There is no excuse to cause that kind of emotional and mental pain to someone. It ain't right.

I ain't never been no captain, but if I were to walk by while that type of punk crap was going down, I'll have to put that cape on and "Dun, da, da, dun!" Feel me?

-Oso

From The Beat: Sure, we feel you Oso, but why is it worse to assault a woman for sex than to assault anyone else for whatever gain you might get? What makes one assault justifiable, but the other not? What about the emotional pain caused to the family of a murder victim? Aren't you just trying to condemn behavior you don't engage in while excusing behavior you do engage in? We agree that rape is a terrible crime, but then we think there are worse crimes, namely those that leave the victim dead or permanently crippled. Are we wrong?

I'm An Ugly-Ass Ninja

Females call me ugly but say I'm nice
They say I'm a roach, damn — that's cold as ice
Females say I'm respectful, but an ugly-ass ninja
That I say nice things, but I look like an ugly-ass tigger
But I'm gon' still respect them 'cause that's my style
I'm hella ugly, but I'm still buck wild
I'm not that good lookin', and I'm no jigga
But keep this in mind, I'm an ugly-ass ninja

-Jovan

From The Beat: It's cool that you treat women with respect, and that you don't react to others' cruel words. But ugliness, as beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, so we're sad to hear that you're convinced of your ugliness. What's ugly to one will be truly beautiful to another.

Got Lucky

What's up Beat? This is Indio from Redwood City, stuck in the Hall, just chillin'. I just turned 18 and I had court on my birthday. I'm being tried as an adult, which means I was supposed to get transferred to County.

I had a good court report, and my lawyer asked if I may stay in the Hall. The judge said yeah because I've been doing hella good. Don't get me wrong, I'm still down to the fullest, ya' know. I'm just doing my own little thang up in here.

To all, stay up, push, pull, and strive through these hard times. Bust down, be organized, and help each other out. Keep y'all heads up. Much love and respect.

-Indio

From The Beat: You know how we feel about your commitment to keep banging, Indio. We see how good you're doing in here, which lets us know you have it in your power to make different choices out there, too. We hope you see that there are some consequences to your decisions that we know you would regret immediately — like getting shot and confined to a wheelchair, getting a long prison sentence, hurting or killing a child by accident, and other possibilities that are equally disturbing — and that, once they occur, it's too late to say, "If only..." You've got such potential, Indio, we hope you'll be able to fulfill it.

That Girl

We once were best friends till you turned on me. I thought our friendship would last forever. You took my kindness for my weakness and tried to set me up, so I got away from you without saying "bye."

Everything was cool till you messed around with one of the enemies. Till this day, people say, "What happened to your best friend?" and I say, "Oh, she is dead." Now, when I see you on the streets, I see you as a rival, and I don't speak to you. You're that girl that was a friend. Now you're a friend of a friend that told a friend you wanted to be my friend, so, don't mess with the enemy.

-Midnight

From The Beat: We can't help but think that the stage on which you operate, with "enemies" on one side and you on the other, is very, very small. We wonder what would happen if it suddenly became a bigger stage by some kind of invasion by outsiders. If your 'hood was suddenly invaded by aliens from another planet determined to kill everyone in sight, would you and your enemies find a way to join hands to resist the invasion? Or, would you just do the job the aliens wanted done anyway by killing each other off?

**If you think
I'm a screw up,
come up to me
and tell me that
I am a screw up.**

My Smile Will Remain

There's a lot of things that make me smile:
My family makes me smile
My friends make me smile
My boyfriend used to make me smile,
but that smile is upside down now
The thought of me getting out makes me smile
And when I get out
my smile will remain.

-Tiny

From The Beat: It's ironic that you've chosen the nom de plume "Tiny," 'cause there's nothing small about the submissions and the emotion you come with each week. How can you use your family and friends for support when your smile starting to fade? Lost love can quickly turn the smile upside down, but is there a way to feel the pain without losing yourself to it?

Me Without You

Why'd you have to play games?
Why'd you have to cheat?
Baby, you know things aren't easy for me right now
You've only written me one letter
Not even telling me everything
What?

You thought I wasn't going to find out?

You knew I loved you
You knew I cared
When I get out

It's gonna be weird
Me not having you there

To support me
To be with me
To listen to me like you used to always do
It's like these two-and-a-half years
Just all went down the drain
I still think about you
I still miss you

I cry about this whole situation
Me without you

-Tiny

From The Beat: Man, you bring the pain in this one. Maybe it hurts so much to read because you are so particular; the situation comes to life, and your words are so direct that there's no escaping the trauma this betrayal has brought. How will you begin to pick yourself up without him around? The hurt from the breakup will slowly fade, and you'll be left with the memory of the pain instead of the pain itself. How will you begin to define yourself again without him?

What It Do

What it do, cousin
What it do?
Run up in yo' house and act a fool
Rush yo' whole town and yo' crew
Homies up, hater down — what it do
I'm jottin' these rhymes
Off the top of my mind
While I'm doin' my time
Straight six-to-nine
Yeah, I'm shakin' these hater
They try to hate on a playa
Gettin' transferred in a week
But it's nothin' to me
I'll be still in The Beat
Down in Napa Valley
Aight then, ya
I'm have to end like this
Wit' my two fingers in the air
Ya, I'm out — peace!

-Ko'na and P-Dubb

From The Beat: Off the top of your head you drop some tight lines. Why do you think people are trying to hate on you? Have you ever hated on anybody in return? See ya in Napa.

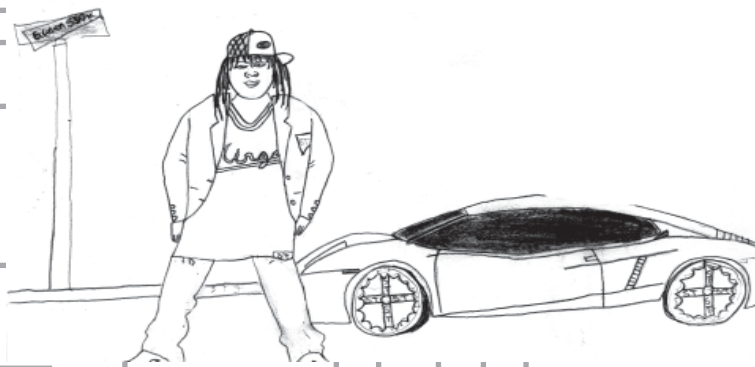
Needs

These are not wants, they are needs:

I want to die
I want to cry
I want to kill
I want my pills
I want to feel
I want to deal
I want to heal
This can't be real

-Smokey

From The Beat: We want you to be okay. We want you to live free days. We want to be able to take all of your pain away. We want to help you step into the light so you don't feel so gray. And if you may, we'd like you to answer just one question. If you had an organization that was ready to help you, what would you give them as suggestions?



Criticized And Ridiculed

Ha, Beat, this Shrek One coming out of South San Francisco. Let me tell you some things. I've been locked up for eight months and it sucks.

I was at Camp and I got kicked out for some dumb stuff, but let me say some things: I got kicked out of Camp and I came to the Hall, and you know what funny? People up in here got the story wrong. People don't know what's real up here. People ask a lot of dumb stuff.

I've been criticized and ridiculed all my life. People think that I'm a screw up, but I'm not. If you think I'm a screw up, come up to me and tell me that I am a screw up.

I'm still going to love South San Francisco because I was born there and I know a lot of people. Those people have respect for me, but if you don't respect that, it's cool. For all that are locked up, much love. Keep your heads up. Much love.

-Shrek One

From The Beat: When you say you were kicked out of camp for some "dumb stuff," we wonder what that means. Was it the kind of "dumb stuff" that you could have avoided? Who is paying the price for that dumb stuff now? Does that make you want to do anything differently? What have you been criticized and ridiculed about all your life? How do you handle that kind of disrespect? Do you give people reasons to ridicule you, or does this say more about those who criticize than it says about you?

Small Things And Large Make Me Smile

The things that make me smile can be just the smallest things on a bad day such as a simple smile, or a hello, maybe even a pat on the shoulder, or even a handshake.

The thing that makes me smile the most is my girlfriend. Right now, she is the only thing that is important to me. The way she walks, talks, acts, laughs, cries, and everything about her makes me smile. When I talk to my best friend, Edgar, who is my girlfriend's cousin, it just brightens my day. I can tell him everything, and we can talk to each other about everything. Knowing that makes me proud and makes me smile.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: You're lucky to have a person in your life that you can relate to so easily. But it is those "small things" you write about that make us smile (and make us believe these aren't such small things, after all). Do you think life would be better if everyone took the time to smile, to say hello, to pat each other's backs, and to reach out to shake hands?

Misunderstood

I reside in South San Francisco where we show no pity for the weak.

In the area where I dwell we are programmed to defeat. We show no sympathy to our rivals because they're the enemy.

Kicking it in the park
we stay sucka' free
Holding our flag high
to defend our beliefs.
'Cause I'm just a soul
whose intentions are good,
Oh Lord

please don't let me be misunderstood.

-Kermit

From The Beat: We believe we understand you more than you know. We understand that you are in a hard place right now. We know that everything you talked about in your piece had something to do with where you are today. We also know that you don't want to be where you are today. So how does all of that relate to each other? Do you even think there is a relation? We do, and because we do, we understand more than you think. We love the song you quote at the end, but we think more of its lyrics would be appropriate: "And sometimes I find myself alone/Regrettin' some foolish things that I have done."

Unexposed

I got a lot of rage and a lot of anger in me. Most these fools is haters and nothin' but strangers to me, but they ain't worth my time. I ain't tryin' ta catch a case. I don't want the whole pie, I just want a lil' taste. But these haters is some babies, puttin' on shows, actin' like they crazy. Too self-conscious, I suppose.

I'm sick of people that bark and don't bite. They say I'm a square 'cause I'm quiet. I'm not a square. I just don't talk shhh. I don't have to prove myself to no one. I'm in day care here, and fools try to act hard like they have to. Like Fifty Cent says on the Obie Trice CD: "I don't toot my own horn 'cause I don't have to. You could run your mouth. I don't care but if you get too close I'ma clap you."

Feel me? Get barkin', haters. The silent ones is the people to worry about, the peeps that don't expose too much.

-Young Rc

From The Beat: There are a whole lot of people in the world that spend their time trying to break the next man down in ways that aren't respectable, like the people who criticize others behind their back and wouldn't tell the person to their face. But to let these people get to you means that you're letting them control your emotions. If they can anger you, they have some sort of control. Do you really want them to have that power? Think about it...

Lucked out

Just went to court on the twenty-second and I lucked out. The DA was recommending camp. That would have meant these three months would have been dead time. Forget that. My PO wrote a good court report, that I graduated and all that good stuff, so Judge Livermore would know what kind of person I really was.

If I had Diaz it would have been a wrap. What really helped me was the reference letters from my moms, sis, and counselor at Skyline. Even though I got two strikes, I only have a hundred and twenty days more to do. I'm extremely happy.

Well, I guess I got what was coming. Fought my case and lost. Four months ain't nothin'. When I get out, I'm gonna kick it and get back on track. Puff a fat one — B-Legit. Thanks to P-Mizzle for a good hall report, even though I never seen two step since I've been here. One steppin' it.

-AP

From The Beat: Now that luck is on your side, what are you going to do to ensure that you have total control so you don't have to rely on luck again? Do you believe that everything happens for a reason? If so, why do you think this happened? If not, how do you explain what happened?

How I feel

It is somehow amazing how through eighteen years of goin' through it all and doin' all kinds of shhh, I get caught slippin' over some petty shhh. Never would I have thought that I would be in here wit' all these people who have been caught up. I guess there's a first time for it all though.

I will just try and let this be my lesson learned and move on. Nothin' changes though. You just think about things more. All I have to say is be careful about things so you ain't in here.

Keep grindin' and watch out folks! Don't let this place get you down 'cause there's a lot to look forward to when you get out. The DA can kiss my butt — that's how I feel.

-D

From The Beat: How is 'just thinking about things more' effective? What do you mean by 'thinking about things more'? If you're not grindin', then you wouldn't have to watch out? Right? Then why grind?

Hurt So Bad

I remember when my homeboy Solo passed away. That hurt a lot because it was hard to look at him in the coffin.

Just a week before he passed away, we kicked it with hella homeboys and got hella bent and smoked some chuncks. But it hurt so bad when I bought the roses I threw on his coffin and saw an OG shed a tear for another fallen soldier. RIP Solo.

-Steven

From The Beat: How many more tears will have to be shed by how many more OGs before people understand that everyone's life is precious, and that what we share (love, hate, pain, joy) far outweighs what separates us? When will we understand that every human being is connected to some other human being whose heart aches when he's gone, someone who sheds a tear, even for your worst enemy. At the same time, we know that losing a homeboy is always hella sad. What was your fondest memory of Solo? How old were you when you met him? We know you're hurting, but if you think about the good times instead of him being gone, it tends to be easier to deal with.

My Boy Makes Me Smile

When me and my boy together we just chop it up. We've known each other for a minute, so everything we used to do was together. He's my partna in crime. We clown on each other you know, just for laughs, but mostly on other peoples. We get high together, eat our munchies and just reminisce 'bout good old times.

I can't really do that with anyone else, just 'cause they don't know me and been around me for that long. This guy has even lived with me. We brothers from different mothers and different colors.

Girls also make me smile, but I get bored with them. But even in here, my partna make me roll all the time. Yup, we both locked up three days apart from each other. He's getting out. I'm happy, but damn, I ain't gonna smile no more in here...

-AP

From The Beat: We know that your piece was very positive, but we can't help but feel sad that two people that are so close are now both locked up. A lot of people have said that girls make them happy. And we know the obvious reason why, but what else about girls makes you happy? Do you ever chop it up with them? Is there anything else about girls that makes you happy?

Too Cold Hearted

Can't have sympathy for any means.

Grew up with so much pain and anger inside of me.

As a youngsta myself neglected me.

I ask myself how could that be.

Got my love from Gs

and the streets.

See homeless people on the streets

for them I have no sympathy

because if that was me,

they would not give a damn about me.

The world is too cold hearted

to be able to have sympathy.

-Devious

From The Beat: Some of us would say you're being pessimistic, but others would say you're just being very real. Do you think there are people in this world that are worth showing sympathy towards? Who might these people be to you? Has anybody ever shown you sympathy? And lastly, what's the relationship between how much sympathy you receive versus how much sympathy you give?

Survive

Pain and struggle is what I see through my eyes.

My people busting, hustling, doing what they can to stay alive.

Me I strive

to survive

out on these streets

filled with dope fiends and mobs knocking beats.

Try to hold my grounds

on these slippery streets.

Trying not to slip

and fall six feet deep.

That's why I creep

in a black hoodie like the grim reaper.

No lives, just money I'm trying to seek.

No need for blood to leak.

But for the cats who trying to get me:

My fingers known to be freekas

to the clicks of my heat seekas.

-Devious

From The Beat: Those streets are as mean as you just described them. And the most unfortunate part about all of this is that it seems like it gets worse as the days go by. Is there a way to lessen the violence in the streets? If so, how? If not, why? What about the streets is so attractive to so many young people?

I don't want the
whole pie, I just
want a lil' taste.

Change

This place is rough
It makes you tough
You may not realize it
'Cause you can't see shhh
This place will change your life
You want to change, right?

-Smokey

From The Beat: Did the place change your life? Do you feel better or worse when you write? Are you tougher now than you were before you got locked up? What about this place is the most rough?

Keeping Myself Out The Hall

When I get out, I will try to go to temple every weekend. I will go to my house and be happy all the time because I hate Group Homes and I never want to go to one again. I miss my family and my friends.

What's up, Troy? I wish I could be home now. Also, when I get out, I want to go to a San Jose Sharks hockey game, and I also want to play hockey again.

-The Hockey Man

From The Beat: How will you manage to be happy all the time when you're home? We worry that the first time you're unhappy (because everybody has moments of both happiness and unhappiness), you'll do something that will bring you back to lock up. We hope we're wrong, but we know that just wishing to be home is not enough. How can you get control of your emotions so that you're not tempted to do the things that have brought you here more than once?

Hockey, 24/7

If I had 24 hours to live, I would play hockey all day and be with my friends and family. I think they would miss me a lot. I think that my family cares about me the most because they always spend the most money on me. I miss my mom, dad, brother, and sister. Love ya.

-The Hockey Man

From The Beat: We can see how much you miss you family, HM, and we hope that feeling translates into a new way of living when you're out. We know you've had some problems with self-control, and we hope you can work on those problems so that you don't put yourself in a position to lose your freedom again.

My Gangsta Survival

Who would ever think that a gangsta would survive? Most people say gangstas don't live that long. I'm in a gang, and I live on enemy lines every day. No time for games, no time to play. Them fools on the block are waiting for me to make a wrong move and, if I do, that's my life.

I've been labeled as a wise man. So much stuff I seen in these streets. Every single day, I peep game. He taught me more than I needed to know, game that would last me more than a lifetime.

All these pandillas, (gangs) in the 'hood ain't no joke. Some think that they hard, but they're not. Pero (but), I'm in the street living my life, and I don't give a damn about no one else's. I got no respect for the rivals, rollin' in a stolie with my girl by my side. I know she got my back 'cause she has never let me down.

I'm a soldier in the game. Got much respect for the homie, Boxer. He taught me a lot in the game, and things have not been the same. The homie Juice was there for me when my daughter got killed. He's like an angel to me. The homie Chop taught me how to love the game and for that, much respect for him and his 'hood.

Homie Oso is about to get out, not from the game, but jail, and that's my number one carnal. Do what you do and you will get what you want. The homie Indio is a true G. Much respect and always watch your back. Mickey, you know I care for you. This is from the soldier who won't stop putting in work. Bone, my right hand man, be cool until you get on the outs 'cause your little sister looks up to you. And, for the homie Juice, much love for you.

-Midnight

From The Beat: It is always nice to acknowledge and thank those who have schooled you — if some of the schooling you're thanking them for could lead you back to jail, or worse. Before you give your life to the "cause," we'd like you to pay close attention to Oso's good-bye piece in this issue, where he writes: "Strive for the betterment of your education and well-being." That is advice worth following!

You Got What I Need

Baby girl, you got what I need
But the only thing that I hate is your greed
You are as pretty as a rose
But yet you're still a greedy nose
You have the body of an angel
But an attitude of a demon
But I still hate your greed
Matter of fact, you ain't got what I need

-Prince Charming

From The Beat: Sounds like you're a little confused about what your relationship to this girl should be. We're not sure what greed you're talking about, and why she has the "attitude of a demon," but we appreciate your final conclusion. Maybe it's time to see yourself as the foundation of your strength and commitment to a better life.

Emotion

It's like a jar full of potions
like the pain that makes you feel like you're goin' insane
or like you're broken-hearted
but you still have that feeling where you don't wanna be apart
or the hate where you feel like no one can fade you
but it all leads to anger
but you go lie and say it doesn't matter
whereas some people stress and look at food and get fatter
so the jar gets full with all of this
I just hope no one balls up their fist.

-Medicine

From The Beat: Right on — you tap into the emotions and let them pour in this piece, and the result is some lines and descriptions that are tight for their individuality and seriousness. How do you deal with the anger when it builds? What do you do when you feel like you're going insane? How do you deal when you know it's all turbulent on the inside but you lie and say it doesn't matter?

I think
that my
family
cares
about me
the most

I Need To Know

Baby girl, I need to know what you want
I need to know so I can fulfill your needs
I need to know if you're feelin' me
Come on lil' momma, can you tell me
Tell me how you feel, baby
You will always be my lady
Girl, you need to speak your mind
Because of you, I quit the grind
Your silence makes me feel like I'm on Death Row
So baby girl, I need to know

-Prince Charming

From The Beat: We feel your nervous anxiety in this piece, so we hope you hear from your love soon. But if, through some unlikely set of circumstances, you find that she is no longer with you, we hope you will see that quitting the grind was something you needed to do for you, and not just for her. If you recognize that, then you should be able to make it through those difficult times that all of us have to face from time to time.

Lamei Hurts So Bad!

My feelings get hurt every day; I feel soooo bad deep down inside. My heart burns, and I feel that it's time to get out of this hellhole! I sleep off in misery, and sometimes it's all good.

Anyway, ninjas be playin' too much. They need to quit playin' and be real 'bout themselves, feel me? A ninja can hurt. Me — sometimes, but it's nothin'.

-Lamei

From The Beat: For all the bravado in your last line, the rest of the piece lets us in on the truth that you — and so many others, especially in the Hall — prefer to keep on the down low. What hurts you the most? Is it other people, men who've done you wrong? Is it being in the Hall? Or is it maybe something deep within yourself?

Memories Of What Makes Me Smile

Being with my family, with my girl, getting out the system, and never coming back. Well, smokin' weed, being on the block with my homies, making love to my girl, you not doin' pimp thangs, and kickin' it makes me smile all day, every day. One love.

-Young Quis

From The Beat: Getting out of the system and never coming back is definitely worth a smile or two. But how do you plan to achieve that goal?

They need to quit
playin' and be real
'bout themselves

Hurts So Bad

Someone that I've hurt was mi Carnalito. Me and my other brothers and my homies even used to beat him up and make him use drugs. We were trying to make him strong so he wouldn't be a punk and we thought it was funny.

We got taken away from home and split up, and he kept doing the same things that I used to do and so he ended up getting jumped into the same gang que yo, and using the same drugs as much as me. Now he's all messed up and runs the streets. There'd be nothing wrong with that I think if I was on the outs, but I feel like its my fault 'cause I influenced him, and now I can't protect him from these busters and so it hurts so bad.

I want to give a shout out to my family, my homies and to my boyfriend, Birjinio. I love you all and miss you. I'll see you soon. I'm getting out in 40 days. Much love and respect,

-Dreamer

From The Beat: We can feel your anxiety and guilt for putting your brother in harm's way, and then finding yourself unable to protect him. Do you think beating up a child and giving him drugs actually makes him stronger? In what ways? Since you put yourself in the position of getting yourself locked up, how are you in a position to keep him safe? What do you think his best protection would be — you on the streets ready to be his body guard, him on the streets packing, or him doing the things he should be doing for his own future: going to school, avoiding the block, and strengthening the most powerful weapon any of us possesses — our brains?

Davis

I miss his cute little smile, not to mention his beautiful body. I wish so bad I could be with him, just simply looking at his face.

I promised a letter or a call, but in this place it's forbidden.

I hope he doesn't think I've forgotten about him. I'm hoping he's still at the hall and reads this so he understands.

If I could talk to him, I'd tell him I'm fine, and that I'm working hard on my program to see him as soon as possible. I'd tell him he's on my mind. I long for the day he can hold me in his arms.

Sixty-nine days to go. Wait for me baby, I'll be back for you soon. I hope you are waiting for me too.

-Katie

From The Beat: Besides his cute smile and beautiful body, what else do you love about Davis? How did you two meet? How long were you together? Is he locked up or free? What are the best parts of his character and personality? Does he have any negative traits you'd like him to change? If the two of you get back together when you hit the streets, do you plan to change anything about how you live so that you can stay out of places like this?

What I Put Them Through

I have sympathy for my jefas because they had to deal with a lot of bs with me — our windows getting broken, picking me up from the hall, coming home late, fights, police and everything they had to put up with.

I know that they really didn't have to put up with that but they did it because they love me, and I respect that. Thank you and I'm sorry.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: To say your sorry for something is a very important step to take, and one that is very difficult for many people to do. At the same time, an apology for bad behavior is empty unless it comes with a commitment to change that behavior for the better? Does this apology come with that commitment? What changes do you plan to make?

Hurting Mom Makes Me Sick

What hurts so bad is the things I've done to my mom when I was using dope. Even though she tells me that she forgives me, I'm not able to forgive myself right now.

I don't feel like I'm worthy of love or freedom, even life or another chance at it. Because what I did to my mom, and what I put her through makes me want to die. I love my mom more than anything, more than myself! She's all I have. My mom has bent over backwards for me more than she should have, and she still is.

I always end up hurting her and taking everything for granted, and it makes me sick.

-Amanda

From The Beat: Your apology to your mother is heartfelt and touching. But when you think of how much your mom has done for you and how much she loves you, what do you think it would do to her if you died? Think about the consequences of your acts. Taking yourself out of the world might make it easy for you, but it would make it much harder for her. Is that what you want? What do you think your mom wants more than anything else for you (and from you)? We think you'll come up with an answer to that question immediately. Now, can you give her what she wants?

Hurts So Bad

I had a friend who I thought I knew so good, but it turns out I didn't. He was so loving and caring towards me and never hurt me.

But then my PO found out some stuff about him on her computer. He made up some lie about why he had gotten locked up. He said he was locked up for assault, for defending himself when he got jumped. And I believed him. I had no reason not to. Then my PO said that was way off. That's not even what's on his file.

He got arrested for messing with some twelve year old. That's hella sick. That hurt me hella bad. Being lied to, betrayed, and just felt hella stupid. I can see why he didn't tell me. He was probably ashamed or something.

I am just trying not to make up excuses in my head for why he did it. There is no reason for that. If he was drunk, high, whatever, he's 21. He knows right from wrong. Dumb ass!

-Monica

From The Beat: We can't really comment on what you say he did (what your PO told you he did) because we don't know. But if it's true that he was messing with a 12-year-old child, that's a very serious thing to have done. We don't want to judge whether he did it out of stupidity ("dumb ass") or mental illness, but either way, it's a major problem that must be dealt with. And we completely agree that it's not something you should have to deal with. If he did it and lied to you, then you're right to dump him. You have your own problems to deal with, let him deal with his.

Taking Control Of My Freedom

What makes me smile is the fact I know who I am and what I want in life. My goals will have a chance in life.

What makes me smile is I'm going to leave Walden House soon, and now I can take control of my freedom.

-Lil' Cutie Pie

From The Beat: It always makes us smile when we read that a young person has made the critical decision to "take control of his/her freedom." What does that mean to you? Now that you're in control, what changes will you make in your life?

Fast Frog, Slow Snail

What keeps me happy are my snails and frog. They keep me smiling and floating along.

Bill, my frog, is my best friend. He's there to comfort me when I feel down.

My snails make my day be letting me know that someone's there. Even though they are so small, they know what love is.

-Sarah

From The Beat: Well, Sarah, we have to confess that we've never known anyone who had a smiling relationship with frogs or snails, so we particularly love this piece. Are these real animals you are talking about? Where does Bill the Frog live? And do you feed your snails, or just watch them in the "wild"? Have you ever had more traditional pets, like dogs or cats? What do you think about them?

What makes me smile --

Is knowing I'm clean and sober
Is knowing my mom is proud
Is knowing I'll sleep tonight
Is knowing I'll eat today
Is knowing I won't get beat
Is knowing I'll succeed
Is knowing I'm free

-Ashley

From The Beat: We love your list of things that make you smile. Which of these things do you already know (for example, that your mom is proud of you), and which do you still have to work on?

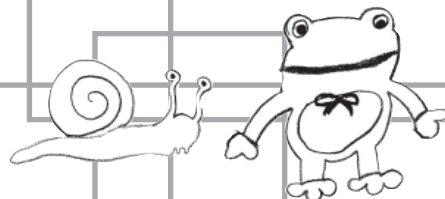
Mrs. Wadud

Hey Mrs. Wadud, it's me Ashley. I'm still in Walden House. I've been here two months. My birthday was July 19. I'm 18. I'm doing so good.

I want to thank you for all the good advice you gave me in the two months I was in there. I want to say thank you. Love Always,

-Ashley

From The Beat: Ms. Wadud has helped so many young women get back on course, and she deserves all the praise that is heaped on her. We know she appreciates reading of your gratitude, and we also appreciate the fact that you know the value of her advice, and that you are grown up enough to say, "Thank you."



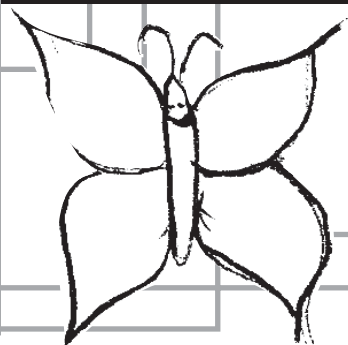
Sympathy

Speaking of sympathy, I feel sympathy at this point and time. I feel sympathy for my little sisters that are just now coming into the program and having to deal with issues I've already dealt with and moved on from, such as abandonment, rape, molestation, and abuse, mentally, physically, and emotionally. I just wish I could take away all their pain. But ... I can't, I'm not superwoman.

The only thing I can do to help them is to offer my support and give them a shoulder to cry on when they need it most ... and right now is the time.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece of writing, and reveals a beautiful heart that can feel the pain of others. It also condenses the pain of your own life into a few, very powerful words that make an impact on the reader. We know that nobody should have to deal with what you've had to deal with, and frankly, we don't know how anyone, especially one as young as you, can move on from such traumas as "abandonment, rape, molestation, and abuse, mentally, physically, and emotionally." But the fact that you want to help others facing similar backgrounds speaks volumes about you. We hope you're as proud of yourself as we are of you.



I Wish I Was

I wish I was a person that made better decisions than I already have. I wish I could go back to the first time I started meth and not take that first hit, because after I started, I couldn't stop.

I liked the high so much and look where it ended me up, in a place that I have no freedom or say on anything. I'm told when I can do something, when I can't and how long I have to do it.

-Jose

From The Beat: Can you imagine what your life would have been like without drugs? Do you want that life? Can you still have that life? What will you do to get it?

From A Graduate

They told me I wouldn't graduate. There's all kinds of haters out there who told me plenty of times that I wouldn't graduate, but I made them eat their fake, lame words.

Look at me now. I got my high school diploma, even though I got it late, but ha, ha, I got it. Not every person that gangbangs graduates from high school. What's up now, talkers?

-Santana

From The Beat: Are you proud of yourself? What else are you going to prove them wrong on? Getting a good job? Graduating from a university? Stop getting locked up?

Need A Hug

I feel like I need a hug
Feeling lonely inside
Wanting to run and hide
Holding in my fear
Wanting to pull out my hair
Everywhere I look
People taking my luck
Figuring where I'll be in a year
Still pulling out my hair
Going to rehab for that dope pipe
Why did I let it take up my time?
Smoked that dizzie
It destroyed my mind
I'm sitting here wanting to leave
Smoke a stogie on the street
35 days locked up in here
Sick of these people sittin' up in here

-Stacy

From The Beat: We're sending you a big ol' Beat Within hug right now. Do you have someone you can ask for support through your rehab time? If not, what are some ways you can keep yourself strong? Try to find a person you trust to listen to and support you, like a teacher, counselor, family member. Or maybe write, draw or paint, meditate or pray.

I Just Don't Care

I just don't care! Also, I don't really care that I don't care. I also don't care if people know that I don't care! And I also don't care that Ben looks like Mobbly from the Jungle Book. I also don't care about anyone that doesn't care about me. I just want to sit around and tend to a fine female, and about any programming that is held here at JSC.

I would rather be using the phone, talking to someone, because that's something that won't make me fall asleep! I would also want to drink a very good beverage that quenches my thirst very well!

-Angel

From The Beat: Awww, you don't care about The Beat? So why are you writing? Do you care that your words will be read by hundreds, maybe thousands, of people? You seem to care about beverages and staying awake.

Strange Encounters

I have run into too many people who don't care as long as they're paid. Like my probation officer has been trying to get me put into a group home. I've been here for five months and I didn't even do anything to get in here! I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time! And probation still can't find a conclusion as to where they want me to go! If you think about it, people that have anything to do with the law don't have enough brain cells to figure out I wasn't the right person to be locked up for four months.

I don't remember anybody telling me anything that stuck with me. Yes, I've had a conversation with a dope fiend, and unfortunately, I was under the influence of a controlled substance at that time so I can't remember much. Now I'm trying to quit the drugs!

-Pete

From The Beat: We agree, it sucks when the people who are making important decisions about your life just don't seem to care, but we also wonder if the system causes those decision makers to care less. Not that it's right, but it's understandable that the same system that frustrates you so much also frustrates PO's, counselors, and other decision makers. Which is easier to change, the person or the system? Sounds like a trick question, huh? Got any suggestions for either? If you could build the best Juvenile Detention system with the best PO's, judges, even cops, what would it look like, feel like, and how would the decision makers act? How would the kids in your system act?

**probation still
can't find a
conclusion as to
where they want
me to go!**

Santa Cruz

You Make Me Smile

See, what makes me smile is you — being happy and next to me, and to kiss your lovely body and see your beautiful face. See, what makes me smile is loving you.

See, I love you, babe, even if you're not next to me. See, what makes me smile is seeing you most of the time. See, what makes me smile is loving you.

I love you baby, I really do. Remember that all your life.

-Bertha

From The Beat: We don't like to print too many love poems. Most of the love poems we receive should be sent directly to the object of your affection. But we opened ourselves up for it with this question, so... here's your love poem.

I Try Hard Or Not At All

I try so hard and this is where I end up?
My homies come in and leave, then I call and say what's up
Is it me or is it the DA?

Will there ever be a time I have big pay
Live on my own without my mom having to pray?
Don't know my dad and he don't know me

But I'm sure that's for the better, because I wouldn't live so happily
Kickin' it with my homies and listen to the beats

-Coda

From The Beat: What do you try hard at? You talk about wanting the big pay, but you don't say what you're doing to earn it.

I Did It

This one time I was a Nacimiento Lake and my friend backed his mom's car off the side of a fire break. I had to lift the back end of it off of the ground to align it with the fire break. I didn't think I could do it, but I did.

-Peace

From The Beat: Uh-oh, watch out Schwarzenegger. That's cool you impressed yourself while helping your friend. Are you going to challenge yourself again?

**I think it's just
made me more
frustrated, dealing
with the people
in here.**

My Girl

The person who has hurt me the most is my girl. I just talked with my mom and asked her to give me some advice. She said to go over things and to be sure to talk before I act.

-Diego

From The Beat: That's very good advice. We hope you'll remember it.

Hurt Bad

What has hurt me real bad is being in Juvenile Hall for some serious charges. But that doesn't matter to me as much as how much I miss my family and loved ones. That's the only thing that really hurts, and I'm not getting over it. Still dealing with it because I'm still in here.

I think it's just made me more frustrated, dealing with the people in here.

-G

From The Beat: Start with yourself. Dealing with yourself is the only true beginning. Other people are easy to deal with when you've learned to be honest with yourself.

Bad Accident

Hey, what up Beat? I recently got back in Juvy in the middle of July. The reason I'm back is because I had an accidental overdose on DXM. The story was my girlfriend of six months cheated on me with six people last time I got locked up. My best friend told me about it and I didn't want to believe it, so I called her and she told me it wasn't true. Then she called me back later and confessed.

I couldn't take it and took twenty DXM pills. I thought each pill was 15 mg, but when I looked at the back of the box after I took them, they were 30 mg each, which equals 600 mgs. That equals two strips of acid.

-Marty

From The Beat: What did you do when you realized you had a potentially lethal amount of DXM in you? Even though your girlfriend did what she did and confessed to doing it, did you think through what she told you? Why did she cheat on you? Was she angry you got busted? Why did she confess? Is she trying to hurt you? Can you figure out her motivations? Is what really matters, how she feels about you now? Maybe you should give this girl some time and distance, so you can find out who she is and what she means by does what she does, and figure out if you can live with it or not. Drugs may relieve your pain temporarily but after you come down, you still have your pain to deal with.

There Goes Summer

The first time I came to Juvy was for breaking into a school and tagging it up a few times. I spent a day in here for not having a big record. I didn't have anything on it but a list of fights in middle school, so I was lucky to get out fast.

The second time was for a bunch of gun charges. I had eleven felonies at the beginning, then my three attorneys made it to seven felonies.

I stole a woman's gun. It was a small gun, but very powerful. The second gun was a Luger roam rifle, a crazy German war gun. I spent a month in here for that. This time I had a knife and I am going to spend two months in here. My roommate just left twenty minutes ago, so it's going to be slow and boring here.

-California

From The Beat: Why are you carrying weapons at all? That could only lead to someone getting hurt. Don't you know that if you get convicted as an adult for three felonies, you can get a mandatory 25 to Life sentence? It's called the three-strikes law. What did you intend to do with those weapons? You're still lucky to only receive a month for carrying a woman's gun and a Luger. What good can possibly come from your carry weapons? Can you stop carrying any weapons, before something terrible happens to your victim or yourself?

My Feelings

I ain't got nothin' left

Except my family's respect

But that's all that matters

My feelings ain't like glass and never shatters

I do have feelings but not like most

People trust in them and then get lost

I ain't got nothing to say, el cuete no saco (I won't pull out my gun)

Hay los guacho al rato, se despidе, Flaco (I'll see you later, much love)

-Flaco

From The Beat: Are you sure that your feelings never shatter? You know, we as humans aren't immune to feel emotional pain — that's what separates us from animals. How can you face your emotions head on?

People Always Talk Trash

I know I'm a sucka, because I let people pick on me. I am also a sucka, because people always talk trash and I never do anything about it.

When people mess around with the girl I like, I get mad and people call me a sucka.

-Slop E

From The Beat: What are your options when someone tries to mess with your girlfriend, Slop E? Pretty much the same options everyone has. You can talk trash back, get mad and fight, threaten to fight, make a joke of it, and let stuff happen. Can you talk to your girlfriend and ask her how she wants to handle it and/or how she wants you to handle it? Together you ought to be able to get the mess straightened out! Good luck!

Two Months Ago

Two months ago, I walked through the Juvenile Hall doors, not knowing what was ahead of me, but now I know what is ahead of me — a bright future and a lot of money making. I see myself in either in Hollywood or BET, so either way it go, I'm gonna be something big and a lot of people is going to love me and is going to want to see or hear more of me.

I'm glad I have The Beat, 'cause that's helping me get out poems and stories, so people can read them, so that's like a start of my future. I plan on putting out some of my poems in the world and let the whole world read my stuff and like it.

-Smurf

From The Beat: Why don't you write out all your poems, raps and stories and let The Beat Within publish them? Then you can get some feedback on how people respond to them. Everything The Beat Within publishes gets copy written, so no one can copy them without your permission. Let your imagination go, as long as it's decent, it's all good.

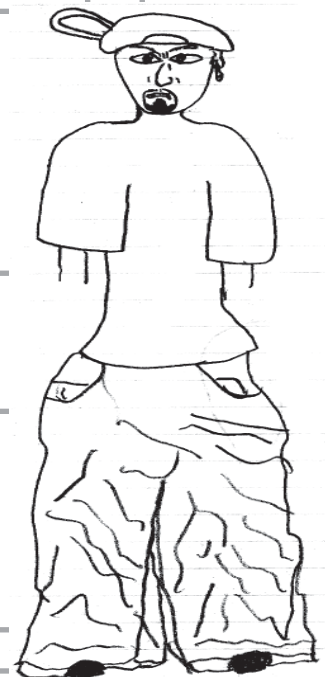
For Eternity

It ain't no stoppin' me, even if you poppin' me. I'm a soldier. I'll live for eternity. It ain't no hurtin' me.

-Eli

From The Beat: How is it that you're immune from pain? Isn't being in Juvy a form of being stopped, even if it's just for a minute? If you're a soldier, who's army are you in? What does being a soldier require of you? Who's your general? What if your general and your army demands that you break the law and risk your freedom? And your life? Are you down for that too?

**I'm glad I have The Beat,
'cause that's helping me get
out poems and stories,
so people can read them**



Mis Consejos A Los Desesperados

Bueno, mi consejo es para todos aquellos que estan desesperados. Yo lo que les puedo decir es que no pierdan la calma como los demás que se encuentran en este sistema. Para todos los que tienen este problema con su familia o novia, hay que tener calma y dejar que pase todas las cosas.

Siempre nos van a venir tiempos malos y tiempos buenos. Así que si se encuentran en tiempos difíciles, no pierdan la calma porque esto es sólo un tiempo y todo va a pasar algún día. Todo terminará y regresaremos a la calles junto con nuestras familias y con nuestras jainas. O sea que pongan sus cabezas en alto.

From The Beat: Esperamos que ellos te escuchen y que se den cuenta que esto es pasajero, que lo único que se debe hacer es esperar a salir y buscar la manera en como reflexionar en las cosas que hicieron malas. Hay que tener calma en todo momento, y más en los momentos difíciles, acuerdensen que después de la tormenta viene la calma.

My Advice For The Desperate Ones

Well, this advice is for those who are desperate. All I can say to you is not to lose hope like the rest of the guys who are stuck in the system. For those who have problems with their families and their girls, I want you to stay calm and just let things happen.

We are always going to have bad and good times, so if you find yourself in the hard ones, just maintain your calm, because it is just a matter of time, and everything will end some day. Everything will end and we are going to go back to the streets with our families and our girls. Just keep your heads up.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

**I've seen
so many
things
happen,
and I don't
want to be
involved
in any
of those
things**

Para Ti

Nomas quiero que sepas
que te quiero, mijo.
Que si me miras enojada
es porque me importas tú y me importan
las cosas que haces.
Pronto te miraré,
Pero siempre en mi corazón te miraré.

From The Beat: Se nota que estas muy enamorada y muy ilusionada que pronto miraras a tu chavo. Espero que todo le vaya bien a ustedes dos.

For You

I just want you
to know, my baby,
that if you see me mad,
it is because I care about you
and I worry about the things you do.
I soon will see you,
you will always be in my heart

-Sad Eyes, Marin

Fumar Y Muchacha

Lo que más me hace sonreír es tomar y fumar marihuana un fin de semana con mis homies.

Otra cosa que me hace sonreír es ver a una muchacha tan hermosa como una mariposa, que me gustaría ver de nuevo. Ya llebo como unos meses sin ver a esos hermosos ojos y su hermosa cara y eso es lo único que me haría sonreír.

From The Beat: Bueno, la verda que tu muchacha te haga reir eso es normal, y bonito. Pero la primera cosa que mencionastes, no creemos que tomar y fumar te haga la vida alegre. Te puede poner en onda en el momento, pero que tal después de la loquera, vienen los problemas y todo sigue igual. ¿Alguna vez hacer cosas malas te ha hecho algo bueno? Dinos cuando y si es que puedes.

Smoking And A Lady

What makes me smile is when I smoke marijuana with my homies on the weekend. Another thing that makes me smile is when I see a girl as beautiful as a butterfly that I would love to see again. It's been almost three months since the last time I saw those beautiful eyes and her beautiful face. That's the only thing that would make me smile.

-Smokey, Marin

El Fantasma De La Juvenile

¿G-vo Raza? Me dicen el Mousie y les voy a contar lo que pasó en la juvenile de Santa Cruz. Una noche estaba sentado en mi cama y derrepente miré a alguien que se asoma por mi ventanilla de la puerta, y me lebané a mirar quien era y no miré a nadie. Derrepente lo miré otra vez y rápido me acosté y me tapé con mis covijas y ya no me lebané hasta el día siguiente.

Les conté a los demás y me dijeron que en ese cuarto había muerto un morrillo. Después todas las noches hacía ejercicios y me ponía a resar y luego me acostaba y me tapaba de pie a cabeza. Y también se oían pasos en ese cuarto.

From The Beat: Que miedo, nos imaginamos que debió haber sido un poco terrible haber estado en ese lugar. ¿Estas seguro que era un fantasma? ¿Qué no fue sólo tu imaginación? Que miedo, hasta la piel de gallina nos pusistes ya.

The Ghost From Juvenile Hall

What's up people? They call me Mousie and I'm going to share with you what happened to me in Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall. One night I was sitting down on my bed, and suddenly I saw somebody looking at me through the little window in the door. I got up to see who it was, and I didn't see anyone there. Suddenly, I saw it again and I quickly got into my bed, I covered myself with some sheets and I didn't wake up until the next day.

I told what happened to other inmates and they told me that a kid died in that room. Later, I would exercise every day, pray, get in bed, and cover myself from head to toe. I would also hear footsteps in that room.

-Juan, Marin

No Sé Que Voy A Hacer

Yo me pongo a pensar en como estará mi familia y también en que voy hacer cuando me manden a Tijuana, México. No sé que chingados voy hacer.

Yo he visto muchas cosas y no quisera ser una de ella, son cosas muy culeras que no les deseo a nadie. Lo chido es que voy a estar treinta días más en la juvenile.

From The Beat: Esperamos que haga lo que hagan contigo, que te vaya bien en donde sea que vayas. No dejes que nadie te tire abajo tampoco te dejes derrumbar. Acuerdate que cada quien dirige la vida de la manera que uno quiere y si tú quieres una vida sólida y tranquila, pues la tendras siempre y cuando estes bien lo quieras.

I Don't Know What I'm Going To Do

I think of how is my family doing, and what I'm going to do when they send me back to Tijuana, Mexico. I don't know what the hell I'm going to do.

I've seen so many things happen, and I don't want to be involved in any of those things, they are things I don't want anyone to go through. The good part of all of this is that I only have 30 more days in Juvenile Hall.

-Magic, Marin

Tienes Que Dar Para Recibir

Una vez un señor tenía mucha hambre y andaba de casa en casa pidiendo un pedazo de pan. Cuando yo lo miré, le dije a mi mamá que le pasara adelante y le diera de comer. El señor pasó a mi casa u se sento, comió y se sintió muy agradecido y me dio las gracias muchas gracias. Me dijo, "hijo tu voluntad sera recompensada. Por eso cuando venía de imigrante, yo pedía comida y nadie negaba la comida ni a mí ni a ningún amigo que venía conmigo.

Pues la bolutad de Dios siempre la tenemos en mi casa porque no se le niega una tortilla al peregrino.

From The Beat: Vistes, Dios nos digo, que le dieramos de comer y de beber al sediento y seremos tratado de la misma manera. Creo que Dios premia aquel quien se porta bien con el hermano. Hicistes una muy buena obra de caridad, y esa obra te salvo la vida.

You Have To Give In Order To Receive

One time, a man was very hungry and he was going door-to-door begging for a piece of bread. When I saw him, I told my mother to let him in and give him something to eat. The man passed by my house and he sat down, ate, and he felt very grateful. He said, "Son, your good deed will be repaid." That's why when I was coming up as an immigrant, I begged for food and nobody would deny me or any of my friends some food.

We always have God's will in us because we do not deny a stranger something to eat.

-Erick B5, SF/YGC

**a bolutad de Dios siempre la tenemos en mi casa
porque no se le niega una tortilla al peregrino.**

ISRAEL PEREZ

What makes Israel Perez a great writer in our minds is that there is as much unstated glimpses into his life as stated. Why, for example, is it so important to this paroling prisoner that he have silk underwear, dress socks and a Brooks Brothers suit to wear out of his confinement? Only in the end do we get a hint of the answer — a home life steeped in poverty, abuse, and family dysfunction. The slick clothes become like a visual and tactile refutation of that life. But clothes do not make the man, one's upbringing and environment do — which is the real message of this tragedy. The great Wardog writes us from that prison-within-a-prison, the Corcoran SHU.

The Fruitless Branch

With a sound akin to distant rumbling thunder, the heavy electric-operated door inched open to the early morning sun. Crisp morning air greeted me full in the face as I stepped out of the housing unit and onto the prison yard. Taking a huge lungful of the thin Susanville air, I felt my muscled chest swell under my blue prison shirt. The infant sun's warmth and the last breath of night's cold battled over my skin, causing an effect that was surprisingly pleasant and helped to ease my excited turmoil.

Quickly side stepping the herd of prisoners behind me, I allowed them to flow past in a mindless rush. Their smell of rarely washed blue jeans and jackets washed over me in a way it had not in years, making me fear I would never able to fully scrub the scent from my skin, or worse, the smell of prison now emitted from my very pores. I watched as they headed off to their almost comically low paying jobs, workout sessions, or more than likely to "kick it with the homies" and talk shhh. And from where I stood, I couldn't help but catch bits and pieces of their worlds as they filed out of the building. "A, brother, you got the cards?" "Ninja, you's a fool fo' real." "Damn! That wine was tore up." "A, ese, get that tobacco from that vato."

A couple of the inmates I had gotten to know stopped to shake my hand as they passed, ordering me to "stay up." I did my best to return their sincere smiles, assuring them I planned to do just that.

A shout from across the yard traveled the football field length distance echoing off each of the prison's four gray buildings. Turning toward the direction of my name "Israel" being yelled, I already knew to which "homie" the voice belonged. He stood with three other prisoners next to a cement table, frantically waving me over.

As I made my way towards them, the familiar feeling of thumb size rocks crunching beneath my hard-soled state issued boots reassured me that the moment was actually taking place. My legs muscled through the energy sapping rocks, while I fought back a laugh at seeing my friend leaping up and down with a grin stretched across his face. His actions made me remember all the times he behaved in the same fashion while in middle school, juvenile hall, and CYA (California Youth Authority). And after all the years we'd known each other I still didn't have the first clue as to why he was called Tuna.

Upon reaching the small group, handshakes and manly hugs were exchanged in typical prison ceremony. After which Tuna pulled up a pant leg and approvingly pointed out the Nike sneakers I had given him the day before. In fact, I had given away nearly all my worldly possessions in the past week except for the precious photographs of family and friends which were carefully wrapped in legal papers in my back pocket — the same back pocket I kept touching in a way the first-time swimmer keeps touching the swimming pool's edge.

Standing around the cement table, we tried to trade insults like the morning was no different from any other. But our laughs and smiles failed to reach our hearts and eyes, and nobody was brave enough to speak on it. So instead, we just stood there with the mannerisms of those who don't quite know how to behave in awkward situations. Only the series of handshakes, greetings, and prison hugs pushed to the side the strangeness of the moment, with the trickling arrival of other Vietnamese, Filipino, Chinese, and Cambodian prisoners.

When the morning's ritual came to an end, the attention of roughly twenty or so prisoners turned toward me. My palm comb became very busy combing back the greasy hair they repeatedly mussed up, as I unsuccessfully tried to dodge their seeking hands. They jokingly said things that wouldn't have been acceptable the day before, playfully disrespecting me without fear of reprisal. And just when I began to feel overwhelmed with their razzing antics, the P.A. system crackled to life.

The guard's words seemed to be spoken in a foreign tongue as they spilled out of the speakers. Several inmate names were announced loudly across the quieted yard, but none of them held

any meaning, until I heard the words, "Perez, prison number H-28930, report to R & R for your paroling."

Boisterous howls and shouts of encouragement erupted from the many men around me, as I exhaled the apprehensive breath I didn't realize I'd been holding. Immediately hands grabbed playfully at my prison clothing while a couple arms wrapped around my neck, preventing me from going to R & R (Receiving and Release). Only after five of the prisoners from my hometown of San Jose pulled and tugged at me was I able to break free.

In a tight pack, they escorted me towards R & R, our shoulders and arms bumping as we slowly walked. They seemed to be trying to get as close as possible to me, their talk nearly a conspiratorial whisper, signaling that our being from the same city bound us more closely than to the others. But their behavior reminded me of that of neighborhood kids hanging all over a friend who has just received a brand new bike or toy, as if by close proximity a miracle will somehow take place and the prized item will miraculously become their own.

Arriving at the R & R building I informed my escorts I would catch them later on down the road. They made me promise I would do the small favors I said I would, and deliver messages they didn't trust to letter writing. With a heavy heart, I said goodbye, then opened the metal door and entered.

Inside the medium-sized room, I found a few other paroling inmates, along with an overweight guard who sported a thick walrus style mustache. With his belly spilling over his black leather utility belt, he stood behind a fake marble table top sorting through cardboard boxes. Finding the one he was searching for, he called out a Hispanic inmate's name who quickly stepped forward to claim it. Momentarily confused, I stood there before realizing the boxes contained parole clothes, clothes one's family or friends could send so their loved ones had something decent to wear upon release.

Counting the remaining boxes and the number of inmates still waiting to be called, I couldn't help but conclude not all of us had parole clothes to change into. Calculating the numbers over and over again in my head, fear of the bad luck which shadowed me constantly, began to creep into my thoughts. And just when I decided my friend Jenny had never received my request for clothes, the guard's thick mustache moved ever so slightly allowing my name to slip through.

Without revealing just how panicked I'd been a moment ago, I retrieved my box and moved to one of the wooden benches that was bolted to the floor. The adhesive tape once securing the box had already been cut through, so with a simple flip of the box's flap, the smell of Polo cologne and brand-new clothes enveloped my senses. Peering inside, a smile took control of my face.

There's no way she could have remembered, I thought to myself as my fingers sought out the label attached to the fine black material. Finding the tag, my smile stretched fully across my freshly shaved face when my eyes read the Brooks Brothers label. It touched me that even while fighting a federal prison sentence, she still remembered my favorite suit maker. Whispering a thank you, I pulled the dark suit delicately from the unworthy container, as if one false move would cause the material to disintegrate.

Joining the other men, I began peeling away the ugly blue prison clothes, the blue detested uniform that had defined my status in society for far too long. With each article I kicked under the graffiti-carved bench, I felt the yoke of imprisonment lift. Naked, I reached for the dark purple silk boxers in the corner of the box. Compared to the coarse white ones I'd just discarded, it felt as if I were still nude after I slid the smooth weightless fabric up to my waist. Not missing a beat, I slipped my sun starved feet into thin black dress socks, and wiggled my toes at the feeling I had all but forgotten.

Picking up the baby blue shirt, I removed the stiff paper from its crisp collar, then snaked my fingers through its long starched shirt sleeves. The crisp collar rubbed against my jaw line, making me feel more human with each button I secured.

ISRAEL PEREZ (CONT.)

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Leaving the top button open, I balanced from one foot to the next, working each leg into the perfectly pressed slacks. Fastening the slack's leather belt, I couldn't fail to notice how well my favorite style of dress hung on my new prison-built body.

Giddily, I grabbed the pair of Cole Haan shoes, bringing their black leather to my nose where I inhaled the scent of a world I once took for granted. I slipped the impeccably made shoes onto my feet and nearly winced at putting their unscuffed soles on the dirty ground. Then lastly and with much relish, I swung the Brooks Brothers coat over my shoulder, as if putting on a cape. Sliding it on, I pulled at the cuffs, adjusted the lapels, trying to get a feel of the suit, but instead was left with the feeling the suit was wearing me rather than vice versa.

The silence of the room broke through my moment of self-absorption. Reminded I wasn't alone, I looked up to discover every pair of eyes in the room was on me, staring at me like I'd just beamed down from outer space. Their stares told me what silent thoughts they were thinking, even after they turned away to examine their own wardrobe of Nike Cortez sneakers, 501 Levis, and white muscle shirts. It was so plain to see how their outfits were not all that dissimilar to the ones they'd only seconds ago shed, the same style of clothes they loudly stripped off as if they were afire. And it was so plain to see that their outfits, once free, would be a bright beacon for police harassment, for they stood there in their sagging pants epitomizing the California street thug.

With a confidence that had been missing for the last two and half years, I returned the empty cardboard box to the guard behind the counter. Explaining how a necktie always made me feel stuffy and constricted, I offered him the bold satin striped tie I'd found tucked in one of the shoes. He quickly and illegally made the expensive item disappear into his pocket, with only the wrinkling of his face telling me there was a smile behind his thick salt and pepper mustache. Handing me an envelop with the standard two hundred dollars "gate money," in his eyes I seen a look I was unaccustomed to seeing in a guard, in any prison employee for that matter. All of a sudden, he was no longer an authority figure who controlled every aspect of my life, but more like a 7-11 clerk, or a gas station attendant who held no power over me.

After passing through two razor wire-topped cyclone fences, with a new spring in my step and proud swagger to my movements, I found myself in the prison's parking lot amongst the other parolees. A feeling of being short-changed washed over me as I watched citizen after citizen drive away or maneuver into tight parking spaces. For some strange reason, I had been expecting some form of fanfare, acknowledgment of the long and trying suffering I had endured. But there was nothing meaningful marking the momentous occasion. No symbolic sign from the gods that a mere mortal had emerged from one of earth's hells. Just prison employees and visitors passing by, deeply immersed in conversations with their companions, as the sound of car alarms signaled their arming or disarming, chirping across the small sea of shining metal and windshields.

Seeking to get as far away as possible from the loathsome prison, lest a guard come out claiming a mistake was made, I climbed into the taxi van that would be driving me eighty miles to Reno, Nevada. The very same taxi van every prisoner spoke ill of when they learned prison officials would not allow inmates to parole into their small town. But making my way to the back of the van, I didn't experience any of the animosity I thought I would, nor did any of the other me, which was evident in the celebratory yelps they let out when the driver agreed to stop at a liquor store before getting on the highway.

The liquor store's rows of snack-filled racks overwhelmed my cravings with their bright, multi-colored wrappers. Dorito chips, Twinkies, Snicker bars, cookies, cupcakes, and so much more beckoned at every turn. I walked down each row touching, handling, contemplating every package, until the next highly desired snack caught my attention.

Confused by my sudden ability to choose from such a large variety of choices, I was left utterly indecisive. For up until that moment, prison officials had always made such decisions for me, making the situation in which I found myself completely strange and foreign. So much time elapsed during my indecisiveness, I was surprised to discover my hunger had vanished, and its place

was a bit of nausea. So, with the prodding to be hasty by the waiting me and taxi driver, I grabbed a large bottle of orange juice, and embarrassingly retook my seat in the back of the van.

The countryside scenery steadily moved past, as I stared out the van's window. Peppered along the highway was the occasional farmhouse helping to dredge up old childhood memories with its dirt driveway leading right up to its porch. And even from the briskly moving van, I knew exactly what its yellow-brown dirt driveway would taste like.

I watched as the sun hit the orange-red feathers of a rooster just the right way, and I recalled the feeling of fresh chicken manure oozing up between my toes due to a careless step. Cows stood lazily next to old, rusty barbed-wire fences blankly observing the light traffic going by, chewing their hay in their sideways fashion. I could almost smell their distinct livestock odor.

Scanning the passing scenery, my mind filed away thousands of snapshots while I tried to block out the van's other occupants' increasingly loud merrymaking. They continuously clinked their Old English and "Mad Dog" 20/20 bottles together, and vulgarly celebrated with tongues growing more offensive with each swallow. Music that seemed only to be found on long rural highways streamed out of the radio's speakers, where it contrasted with their semi-slurred urban slang.

With my head resting against the van's tinted window, I could feel the sweating bottle of orange juice ice cold against my crotch. Uncertain whether the cold sensation was an annoyance or not, my mind refused to react. All I could bring myself to do was mentally suppress the rising fear I felt churning in my gut. Fear of failing to follow through with all the plans I'd made during the most distressing sleepless nights in my cell. Nights when I forced myself to look into the future so that I may see the barren landscapes. Nights when I demanded much better of myself, demanded I stop playing foolish games, and put my childish toys away.

The celebratory noise reached an earsplitting crescendo, when a baldheaded parolee with a red-braided goatee attempted to stand up. On unstable legs he tried to give his cheering audience a visual demonstration of how he "tore up" his first sex partner the last time he paroled. Fearfully weary, the driver, scared of the potentially volatile situation he helped to create, turned down the radio and threatened to report their drunkenness if they didn't chill out.

Closing my eyes to the pathetic scene, I inwardly cringed at hearing the whiny protest given the taxi driver. The whiny voice many inmates, both juvenile and adults, learn to use when trying to convince a guard to grant a favor. Staring at the back of my eyelids, it sounded as if I was still behind one of California's prison walls, as I listened to the dialogue.

For the millionth time during the torturous drive, I told myself, "You're a new man, Israel, with a new beginning." And, for the millionth time, I reassuredly touched my precious photographs, as the van pulled up to Reno's airport. Leaving behind the bottle of warm orange juice, along with the other parolees, I entered the airport terminal relieved that the others opted to make their two hundred dollars stretch by going to the bus station, I let the terminal's automatic doors close behind me.

Immediately, I seemed to get caught in the gravitational pull of a bright smile. Mesmerized by the big smile of perfect, pearly white teeth, I walked to the woman who owned them and asked for the next flight to San Jose. In a flash, her red glass-like nails deftly tapped on the keyboard in front of her. Processing my boarding pass, her polite, cordial manners took me aback. The kind way she interacted with me made me feel I had somehow deceived her, tricked her into believing I was a regular citizen in society. So, when she handed me my ticket and, in a soft voice, informed me that my flight left in ten minutes, I moved quickly away, like I'd just got away with committing a crime.

It felt like a giant invisible hand was pressing against my chest as the plane thundered down the runway. Instinctively my body knew when the plane reached speeds that would have been catastrophic if the pilot lost control for the fuselage vibrated all around me, helping to make a mold of my back in the cushioned seat.

With white knuckles, I gripped the chair's armrest expecting

continued on next page

the cabin to rip apart at any second. But when the plane and all its delicate souls lifted smoothly off the earth's surface, instead of violently spilling us across the tarmac, I was completely surprised. Then, even more surprised at the memories climbing towards the clouds triggered — memories of eating tasty corn dogs, chocolate covered ice cream on cones, and riding Santa Cruz's Big Dipper roller coaster. But no matter how hard I pretended the plane was on a secure roller coaster track, my conscious mind new otherwise.

Feeling the plane level off, I was finally able to relax the death grip I had on the armrest. I swallowed my fear of having virtually no control over my death, and permitted my curiosity a glance around the cabin. All about me were people I would have been prevented — even through deadly force — from coming in contact with twenty-four hours earlier. A woman and her pre-pubescent son whispered an argument in the row of seats in front of my own. A young couple, believing themselves unseen, seduced each other with looks only knew the meaning of, while their fingers delicately wrestled. Across from me, three teenage girls dared one another through their giggles to ask about the tattoos covering my neck.

For more than half the flight, I secretly watched them, their every move and gesture unable to escape my watchfulness. It had been so long since I'd been in the presence of "normal" people, I felt strangely privileged. And I could have spent the whole day studying my fellow passengers, I enjoyed my newfound hobby so much. But the captain's professional voice put my voyeurism to an end when he announced the plane would be landing in San Jose shortly.

Twenty minutes after hanging up the pay phone, I had to fight the urge to run out into the street to meet the teal green BMW. Having never seen the vehicle before, I still knew it was my ride by the way the driver learned on the horn from a block away. When the BMW's high beam lights began to flicker on and off, I waved my hands frantically in the air, then worried as the car dangerously swerved across the two lanes to where I stood in front of the airport's passenger pick-up/drop-off area.

Through the car's tinted windows, I could see the excited face behind the steering wheel as the car came to an abrupt stop. Halfway out of the driver's seat, a high-pitched scream in her throat, my friend Jenny had to jump back behind the wheel after she forgot to properly put the car in park. Oblivious to the angry drivers behind her, Jenny squeezed me in a breathtaking hug, even though she weighed but a hundred pounds, and only came up to my chin on a good day. She seemed not to want to end our embrace, but to speak into my chest forever about how she couldn't believe it was me, about how happy she was that I was "home."

Prying her iron grip that felt so good around my lower back, I held her at arm's length so I could confirm my own disbelief. Her almond-shaped eyes, rosebud mouth, and flawless porcelain skin was the same as the first time we met in middle school only the red streaks in her normally straight black hair was different from the pictures in my mind and pocket.

Jenny's slaps to my shoulders and chest came without warning. Her petite open hands, exclamation marks to her yells of how stupid I was for allowing myself to get arrested. Fending off the far-from-lethal blows, I laughed at her scolding that came two and a half years late. And only after I wholeheartedly agreed from a surrendering posture. Did the car horns from the small traffic jam she caused register.

After ordering me into the car, we recklessly pulled away from the agitated drivers, only to pull back over when Jenny spoke of the handgun in the glove compartment. It was her turn to laugh as I retrieved the pearl handle .380 and, panic-stricken, hid it in the BMW's engine. All the horror stories about parolees who got arrested only hours after being released sent a chill down my spine. Getting back in the car, I tried to convey just how serious an ex-felon caught with a gun was, as she laughingly sped off.

Moving down the 101 Freeway at a high rate of speed, my mind spun with all the information Jenny shot out with rapid-fire speed. News of births, deaths, and incarcerations tangled in my head as I struggled to catch up. But before my thoughts had a chance to wrap around one shock, she hit me with another. In a matter-of-fact tone, she spoke of a good friend's murder in San

Francisco, another murdered in New York City, fourteen friends on the verge of turning themselves in to authorities, to begin their eleven and twelve year federal prison sentences.

Taking her eyes off the road to make sure I understood, she warned that things were not as they used to be. And with the look she gave me, I understood everything I needed to know. There would be no credit card for a closet-filling shopping spree, nor anyone setting me up with a car and apartment. I would be on my own for the first time since age fourteen.

In an attempt to lighten the morose mood that had settled in the car like a dark cloud, Jenny excitedly asked if I wanted to visit a brothel. Red-faced, I brushed aside her suggestion as if she had made a slightly funny joke, then spoke on something outside my window. But she refused to let me brush off the subject so easily. She insisted she knew "what time it is," so I need not be embarrassed. With a blush that seemed to cover my entire body, I explained how I didn't want my first intimate experience after two and a half years to be some unattached moment with a strange woman on a worn-out mattress. Jenny nodded her head understandingly, sincerely, then, with a mischievous look, informed me not to try anything on her. We both laughed at that, and I suspected, like me, she was recalling the couple sexual escapades we had as teenagers.

Pulling into San Jose's Lion Plaza was like entering a Vietnamese city that had been transplanted onto American soil. Nearly every face I seen was Asian, with the occasional Caucasians looking lie foreigners in the middle of their own city. Elderly women who wore the dark peasant clothing of their homeland clashed with adolescent girls who exposed tight navels and feminine tattoos on their lower backs. I strained my neck trying to see everything all at once, searching the small crowds for a familiar face. the plaza was just as I remember it to be, and I couldn't help feel a twinge of sadness seeing how my community had kept moving on without me.

Entering Nha Trang Restaurant, I felt like a runaway child who has decided to come home. The tables and mahogany chairs were just as I left them. Even my favorite table behind the tropical fish tank was unoccupied.

After embarrassingly forgetting to pull out Jenny's chair and sheepishly turning away from her feigned appalled look, I peered through the fish tank at the other customers, as I had a thousand times before. I listened to Jenny fill me in on all the details of her criminal case, once the waiter took our orders. All I could do was shake my head at her whispered words, and agree with how stupid others' actions were. I did my best to give advice on how to get through the four-year prison term she expected to receive, telling her how fast time goes by while in jail. But I could see my words were having very little, if any, comfort. So, when the waiter arrived with our meals, I was deeply relieved.

The aroma from the dish of Vietnamese beef stew wafted up on its hot steam. It encircled my head with a smell that made all the tasteless meals I'd been forced to endure vanish. Tearing a piece from the fresh loaf of French bread accompanying the meal, I dipped it into the stew's thick, dark red sauce. Feeling the bread heavy with stew, I placed the scalding morsel on my tongue and entered the kitchen of God's heaven.

But my ecstasy was short-lived when a loud commotion pulled me back to reality. Noisily approaching our table was a friend I'd not seen since the early morning I left the county jail for prison. His name popped into my head when I remembered how mystified his criminal behavior always made me. for he came from a terribly wealthy family who owned many places of business around the Bay Area.

Grabbing me up in an exuberant hug, he loudly inquired for all the restaurant to hear when I'd gotten out of prison. Not looking at me as I answered, he panned the room making sure his actions were being observed. When I quietly informed him I paroled only hours earlier, he seemed to become more excited about my newfound freedom than I was. Then, with misplaced hospitality, invited me to sit down to eat, as if he had bought the meal, or I was a guest in his home.

Slightly amused by his need to appear important, I continued with my meal pretending to be interested in his words and big hand movements. But then I nearly choked on a cube of beef when he claimed to have given my mother a ride home the month before, claimed to know exactly where my family was living at

ISRAEL PEREZ (CONT.)

continued from previous page

the moment. The food which held so much flavor turned bland inside my mouth. And his words were like a bucket of ice water splashing suddenly over my head.

Slowly cruising from stoplight to stoplight, I watched the downtown buildings grow taller with each block we passed. Homeless souls wearing what looked to be the homeless universal uniform, pushed their stolen grocery baskets in the same direction we traveled. Seeing their complete ruin, for a short-lived second I experienced an ugly feeling I hadn't felt since the ninth grade. But I shoved it away as I pulled in the cigarette I dangled out the window, and inhaled a deep lungful. Seeing the way people stared at the expensive BMW we rode in, I thought to myself I was back where I belonged. My fine Brooks Brothers suit meshed perfectly with the fine BMW interior, and I felt superior to those who stared longingly.

Noticing the character of the city blocks changing with each stoplight, the ugly feeling I experienced earlier began to creep back. Rubbing my increasingly throbbing temple, I prayed my now-raging fear was unfounded. But when my friend instructed Jenny to make a right turn, I knew my prayers were in vain.

"Damn it!" I screamed over and over in my head, not believing my luck. It seemed every time I tried to break away from my past, my family somehow found a way to expose from what soil my roots sprung. This point was highlighted when we had to stop the car in order to prevent striking a toddler who, unsupervised, had ventured out into the street. Paralyzed like a deer caught in the headlights, he stood there in only a sagging, soiled diaper that looked as if only its dirtiness kept it in place. An older kid — only by a couple of years — noticing the danger pulled the dirt-covered toddler from the street, the street that was lined with beat-up vehicles, hunks of rolling metal that collectively didn't come close to the cost of the car we were in. And where there wasn't a raggedly vehicle, I could see the gutter overflowing with trash and filthy water. And I automatically knew what the gutter smelled like, what the neighborhood smelled like. I knew it like the surfer knows the smell of any beach.

The three-story building my friend pointed out was just as I expected it to be. It had the look of a building in the middle of a war zone just waiting to be raked by automatic gunfire or struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. In front of it played many more dirty looking kids, and as I exited the car, my ancient blood told me at least one of them was related to me.

Walking up the building's stairs, I grabbed the stairs metal railing for assistance, but pulled my hand away when I felt the unsteadiness of the rail posed more danger than it prevented. Making the same faces and sounds of surprise my friends did, I pretended I found the environment just as foreign.

Reaching the third floor's walkway, I was confronted with a familiar looking female hanging we clothes on the rickety railing. When she noticed me, she covered her mouth in surprise, then darted into an apartment. Realizing it was my sister Nena, I moved to the apartment feeling and hearing my shoes sticky on the walkway.

Excited voices spilled out of the open door along with a couple curious kids who were quickly pushed out of the way by their heads, making a path for more familiar faces, faces that were suddenly all around me, kissing me, hugging me, talking to me all at once so I could not understand. They hung on me as if I were a prince returning from battle, victorious.

Finally calmed down, I was able to take in the features of my three sisters' faces, yet even then was unable to see them clearly, for their tears ran freely, smearing make-up. Embracing them tightly, I always imagined the moment would have been more confrontational, strained, angry. But for some reason, their laughing tears caused my anger to flutter away like a shaken bush full of butterflies. Anger I'd been prepared to carry around until I was laid into my pauper's grave was gone all of a sudden. Gone in the way only family members can erase angry wounds. Then, as if being struck with the same idea all at once, they dragged me into the apartment saying, "Come see Mom."

The apartment wasn't an apartment at all, but rather a tiny studio. And as soon as I stepped into its tight quarters, I

was confronted with my mother. She rested on a worn lazy boy chair that had seen far better days. Unable to get up without assistance, I moved to her instead. And with the awkwardness of hugging someone who's sitting, wondered at her graying hair. Her leathery cheeks sagged where the many tears pulled throughout her troubled life. Her eyes were glassy with moisture, but I could not tell if it was due to my presence, or the Kool cigarette she smoked. And the thrift-store clothing she wore did little to cover the blue varicose veins zig-zagging down her legs. She looked as if two decades had passed, when it was only seven years since I seen her last.

Seven years — I'd come home to discover home was no longer home. Seven years since I was fourteen years old and left to my own devices for survival.

Tracking a cockroach climbing the wall above my mother's head, the only thing I could think as she made small talk was the insect was bold for coming out in broad daylight. Then I began for the first time noticing the condition of the tiny studio. The dirty dishes stacked under a steadily leaking faucet, a pile of clothes slowly building in a corner, the filthy carpet that appeared dirtier than the sticky walkway outside, and scattered across it numerous toys, all broken to some degree.

Sensing my dismay, my mother smashed out the butt of her cigarette in a giant platter, a platter that may or may not have once held a Thanksgiving turkey, but now only held the remains of at least two packs of cigarettes. Pulling one of my nephews up onto her lap, she began speaking about moving to a nicer place soon, and how the family only needed to save up first and last month's rent. Smiling my agreement, I remembered hearing those words a thousand times while growing up. It would always be a nicer place. Soon, a new beginning. Soon.

Feeling overwhelmed, the room began to spin around me. The shock of my instant freedom, coupled with the surprise family reunion, mixed with the humiliation my friend's presence caused, made me need to get away, made me desire privacy, privacy to get my bearings. Demanding Jenny's car keys, I ignored her unsure lip biting and my sisters' baffled questions. With the furry pink key chain in hand, I took the stair's steps three at a time.

Like a concentrating lion stalking its prey from the thickets, my entire body was in tune to the bank's mirrored doors. And each time the doors threw sunlight from an entering or exiting customer, my heart jumped in its cage. The deadly weight of the .380 laid in my lap feeling like a ton, feeling like a solid block of iron crushing all the plans and dreams I paroled with, all the goals I set for myself while languishing in prison — goals that now seemed like childish dreams beckoning on the other side of a toy store's window.

For the fifth time while fingering the gun's curves and grooves, I entertained the idea of putting the BMW's idling engine in gear, and simply driving away. But the images of my family living in squalor prevented me from acting on my inner voice. And the twisted sense of duty I found myself caught up in held my conviction in place.

"Why do you always do this to me, God?" I suddenly heard myself asking, as if God was sitting in the back seat. "You never give me a real chance to make something out of my life." I accused Him, believing every word I said. "What the hell did I do to deserve such a disgusting life?" I demanded of God, truly expecting a response. I spoke to God like I'd not done in many years, spoke to Him in the way a defendant speaks, before learning the jury's verdict, spoke to Him in the way a mother implores Him when being told her child's been in a violent car accident, spoke to Him in the way a Palestinian prays while putting on a vest of explosives, spoke to Him in the way a condemned prisoner talks to Him before coming out of his cell for the last time.

Having no more accusations to hurl at God, no more grievances to lay at His feet, I accepted my situation. Taking one last glance of my surroundings, I searched for any sign of danger. Finding none, I took a deep breath, filling my lungs, and exited the vehicle with gun in hand.



Like a concentrating lion stalking its prey from the thickets, my entire body was in tune to the bank's mirrored doors.

YOUNG D Young D has been an intern in our office for the last half year and a good one at that. He was once a participant in our workshops in SF/YGC. This week he drops a lot of game on us about his thoughts on male female relationships, including his relationship with his girlfriend. Also, we hope all you readers take heed to his piece about weed. He shares from experience from being a big everyday smoker to who he is today a nonsmoker.

What Do It Take To Keep A Relationship?

What's up wit' it? Right now I'm going to express my feelings of what it takes to be in a relationship — an honest one at that.

To have and keep a relationship is honesty, 'cause if you don't have that, then the relationship your in is going to be based on lying and arguing, and I know damn well don't no male or no female like to be lied to now, do you?

I'ma give The Beat some advise on what I do to keep my relationship. First, I show my girl and I give my girl all the respect she needs and wants. I treat her how I want to be treated — ain't that how it goes? I also want to explain how when we first started to talk we couldn't tell each other nothing, 'cause we really didn't know each other like we do now. We was hiding a lot of shhh from each other, but I understand why, 'cause it takes time for everything especially to trust someone. See now I can tell her whatever without her telling somebody and you should already know how I got it like that — it ain't hard to figure out. It's only one word, TRUST.

It also takes effort if you don't know what I mean by that I'm gonna break it down fo' y'all. See effort is something that you want. Say if you want somebody you have to put in more consideration and you also have to find out who that person is — not who you want that person to be. See, it took some time for me to find out who my girl was, now that I know, she's really special to a lot of people especially to me and to be real wit' y'all, I ain't never thought about cheating. First, I didn't come this far to throw it all away.

I'm gonna be real about something else — if I wasn't with this girl I'm wit' right now — I would be with more than just one girl. But it's a trip how when you're not in a relationship it seems like it's hard, but when you is — it's like relationships come to you, but you have to avoid things like that.

I'm gonna put y'all on about something, it seems like when I got in this relationship — females started coming fo' me. But when I wasn't in one, I was looking for one and guess what I couldn't find one?

It seems like when you got something going for yourself somebody or something is going to try to bring you down. For example, I'm doing good right now but for some reason it seems like something or somebody is gonna bring me down. Like females, they see I'm in a good relationship and I'm doing the damn thang so they try the' hardest to mess that up — such as spread rumors about my relationship, or start saying that punk ass "he say — she say shhh," but a boss like me don't let that phase me.

To me it seems like I can talk to more than ten girls right now, I'm not saying I'm a pretty boy but I ain't ugly. I'm relating this to all the people that are in a relationship — if it's not a good one or if things aren't working out take a lil' advice from this piece and put a lil' more effort into it and if you want it, make it work. Don't let nobody or nothing break y'all up.

And I just want my girl, Princess to know that I love and care about her more than any girl I've been with, she the type make a ninja want to wife up, and she the type make a ninja put the guns and knives up know what I'm talking 'bout. That's how I'm gonna end this piece — so stay up and keep yo' head up and don't let nobody bring you down and I'm out. One.

**when you're
high — you
don't realize
what your
doing until
after you do it**

Smoking Weed Ain't Cool

See, when I use to smoke I use to really smoke — not just one blunt or two blunts more like 5-6 blunts a day, sometimes more. What I'm tryna say is when you get to that weed — be careful 'cause it makes you do things that you normally won't do or you don't want to do.

The reason people do it is because it feels good, and to some people it relieves pain or stress, and most people can't help it so they do any and everything to get their hands on some weed.

How I know? 'Cause I was the same way at one time and I see how my homies changed when they get some weed, but its cool 'cause I don't smoke. To be real it ain't all about if you smoke or not — 'cause if yo' homies real — they not gon' change towards you no matter what, feel me? I was never the type to change on my ninjas, but I was doin' stupid shhh when I was smoking — matter of fact my first time going to Juvi — I was high as hell, but when you're high — you don't realize what your doing until after you do it, but it be to late to turn around so you got two choices — either you get caught up or you get messed up. Now you choose.

TROAS BARNETT

Troas Barnett, better known to Beat faithful as Sankofa, wrote the following piece looking into the relationship between the US and Osama bin Laden, the leader of the al Qaeda terrorist network who has perpetrated numerous terrorist attacks against the US, including those of September 11, 2001. As always, Sankofa comes with a message that inspires thought and discussion. Sankofa writes from CSATF in Corcoran; we look forward to hearing from him again soon.

CIA And U.S. Ties To Osama Bin Laden

Why has the September 11 commission in Washington avoided any investigation of the history or strategic motives of those accused of planning the attacks? Is this because an analysis would quickly lead back to the role of the US and CIA in organizing, arming, and training such extreme Islamist fundamentalist forces, and in wiping out progressive secular forces in Afghanistan and other areas? Within hours of attacks, US claimed it was leading to al Qaeda and its organization leader, Osama bin Laden. Within days the US was threatening war on Afghanistan, accusing Muslim fundamentalists of harboring the networks that attacked the US. Who are these forces around Osama bin Laden that the US has branded terrorist? Where did they come from? Who trained and organized them? Answers to these questions lead back to the CIA and back to major criminal campaigns and global rivalries.

Osama first appeared 20 years ago as a major recruiter for US backed armed forces who were fighting the Soviet army in Afghanistan. In 1978 forces allied with Soviets staged a coup and took over Afghanistan's government in Kabul. Resistance developed among a wide range of forces who were opposed to Soviet domination and to traditional patriarchal clans, and were in an uproar over girls going to school. In 1979 the Soviet army invaded to prop up their local allies. Within 13 days US arms were arriving, aiding the Afghans. The US - Soviet rivalry would produce a war that would tear Afghanistan apart: more than one million Afghani people were killed and one third fled into refugee camps.

The US threw its resources behind reactionary forces — mujahadeen. They were organized under the banner of jihad — holy war — to drive foreign troops from the Muslim world. Truth is this modern jihad was controlled from the White House and conducted to serve US interest. The US was opposed to the masses of people; the US wanted to bog down their Soviet rivals; the US was looking for forces that would fight the Soviets but not oppose US interests. In the US, Brzezinski (President Carter's National Security Adviser) and President Carter dreamed that an anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan could spread across the border among Muslim people of the USSR's Central Asian republics.

Funding:

Millions of dollars were funneled through the intensely conservative monarchy of Saudi Arabia. Training of the Afghan mujahadeen was carried out largely from bases along the Pakistani-Afghan border by Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) under the close supervision of the CIA's "covert war" experts. Weapons they provided at first were Soviet and Chinese made so that US backing would not be obvious.

Osama bin Laden:

Osama came to this region in 1980 as a "checkbook mujahadeen." He spent two years bringing funds from the Saudi ruling class to reactionary forces within the Afghan resistance. Osama is the son of a construction billionaire. When the CIA wanted to train thousands of Muslims to fight in Afghanistan, Osama was a key organizer of that effort. After 1982 more than 100,000 Muslims from dozens of countries received political/military training in the CIA backed camps of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Osama helped build the Khost tunnel complex, a major arms storage depot training facility and medical center built with CIA funds. Osama established military camp for 9,000 followers of Wahabbism, an Islamic creed promoted by Saudi monarchy and Afghanistan's Pashtun nationality. This Khost camp became headquarters for al Qaeda and in 1998 was the target of Bill Clinton's cruise missile attacks.

CIA Involvement:

Throughout the 1980s a war army with a quarter-million fighters took shape in Afghanistan under CIA guidance. Military operations were combined with massive drug smuggling. The US hand was more and more impossible to miss, especially after March 1985 when then President Regan's National Security Directive 166 authorized a massive escalation of US funding and weapons supply. The Afghan war against the Soviets was multi billion dollar operation paid for by the Saudi ruling class and the CIA. The US contributions went from 1980: \$30 million to 1987: \$600 million per year. 65,000 tons of US made weapons

and ammunition a year were entering the war by 1987, including high profile Stingers used against Soviet helicopters. By the end of the 1980s, mujahadeen commanders were openly meeting with US Congressional leaders and with Ronald Regan himself. They were part of a global network of CIA organized cutthroats that included the Contras of Central America and Unita in South Africa. The US media then called these forces "freedom fighters." It's inconvenient now for the US to remember Osama bin Laden was a key operative in the largest CIA covert war in history. His movement emerged from CIA training camps in Pakistan.

After the Soviet Defeat:

On February 15, 1989 the last of the Soviet Union's troops left in defeat. Al Qaeda means military base and Taliban means students of religion. Taliban appeared on the political scene soon after a trip by a high-ranking Pakistani delegation to Turkmenistan to negotiate trade between the two countries, which would go through Afghanistan. Soon, Taliban artillery was pounding the gates of Kabul, finally capturing it in September 1996. Taliban has its roots in pro-US Muslim fundamentalism / forces. When Taliban entered Kabul, the US welcomed it. The US dreamed of an oil pipeline from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan into Pakistan. It was part of their plan from dismantling the former Soviet Empire and linking Central Asia directly to Western corporations and markets. The Taliban was at first their hope — as recently as May 17, 2001 US Secretary of State Colin Powell announced a \$43 million aid package to who other than the Taliban, which makes the US the main sponsor of the Taliban.

In December 1991, the USSR collapsed and new undercover initiatives were set in motion in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans. Pakistan's military and intelligence apparatus essentially served as a catalyst for the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of six new Muslim republics in Central Asia. It was the Persian Gulf War that sparked a turning point. The US brought 540,000 troops into the Persian Gulf in 1991 to track Iraq's armed forces who postured to invade Saudi Arabia, where the troops were due to their being in the land of the holy sites Mecca and Medina. Also, Israel was refusing to even discuss Palestinian control of another holy city in Jerusalem. There were deep splits among the Saudi ruling class over the Gulf War. Prominent ruling class forces considered it treason when Saudi King Fahd welcomed NATO forces into the Arab world. In 1996 Osama moved back to Afghanistan and in 1998 reportedly participated in the creation of an Islamic front for jihad to wage war against the US, and the trained fighters all became the infrastructure of this force.

Consequences:

Who has put the masses in the US into harm's way? The US power structure points the finger to the Middle East, but the answer lies on US soil. These imperialists, who have perpetrated countless crimes and rained havoc on the people of the world through their relentless global exploitation and their military actions, have created a situation where millions of people around the world hate the US government.

As the dust clears from our eyes, the people in the most powerful country in the world find ourselves held hostage to the inevitable repercussions of the actions of this US power structure and their bloody military machine. Now, besides the horrors that they have perpetuated against the people around the world, horrors that multiply the tears shed in NY and Washington a thousand times, these cold-hearted death merchants have called forth the same kind of devastation in the belly of the US with a whole array of disguised civil liberty attacks.

George Orwell often said if I could show you a picture of what the world would look like under new world order, I'd show you a combat boot stomping a face. When US citizens actually significantly rebel against the military industrial complex and the threat is perceived, US citizens will then become the most oppressed in the world, under a totalitarian authoritarian police state. If you don't believe me, look at the US landscape now: Camps in every state; militarism is on the rise, and so are attacks on liberties. This is Sankofa on a return to The Beat pages, putting propaganda by Bush's cabinet on the scales and weighing the balance. In closing, the type of information gathered is crucial to the success of any intelligence operation.



ARNISHA

These are the first two Beat Without submissions we've received from our new Beat colleague, Arnisha. We published some of her writings in The Beat Within from San Francisco's YGC, but we're loving having her in the office and getting to know her and her writing better. As you'll see from her writings, this has been a challenging year for Arnisha, but she is coming through it with her strength and faith intact. We are happy to have her in the office and look forward to watching her continue to grow.

World War I

I'd like to tell you a story, one about me.
A story much different from other children you see.
I turned eighteen in April
and I would say this is one of my biggest years
Because this was the time
I experienced my biggest fears.
Once again I tell you a story where at the end,
it ends with a tragedy.
Seventeen years old was the first time I tried crack,
Also the first year where I wish I could go back and
re-track my past,
Then I could have avoided falling on my ass.
I knew it all and listening's always been the problem,
So now I have an addiction and a much bigger
problem And I don't believe
that a drug program will solve 'em.
World War I is the beginning of all to end
and yet the beginning of my life.
R is my name and hustling was my game
And the plan was the to stack coins
and gain street fame.
I hung with the drug dealers,
so-called cold blood killas.
I was a victim to the streets
and crack was the drug I choose
To the point where I stayed up all night
and didn't get no sleep.
Lose a lot of weight 'cause I wasn't able to eat.
This is a hard year,
a year where I made all my mistakes.
A year where I had become pregnant
And when I told my mother,
her words where "oh, that's just great"
But these were her words
after I told her I had just got raped.
I wasn't asking for sympathy,
but I wanted her to be there for me,
Now she's at the point
where she doesn't even believe in me.
A year that broke me down emotionally,
That I cried a lifetime worth of tears.
World War I is the time
where I put life to the real test,
So I know the Lord is watching over me
because I can still say I'm blessed.
World War I was a time of escape and a time to run
And a time to express what really had begun.
The story always goes on and never truly stops
But I live another day sober
Without smoking that white rock.
In my World War I, I do indeed survive.
So believe in yourself and know that in all situations
you can make it out alive.

New Life

Surprised to see myself full of life
knowing that I'm going to be a mother.
I have created a new life.
I think that's great,
But the people that love and care about me
hate the decision that I had to make.
I think at least I'm not fake
And I'm willing to take the responsibility for my mistake.
I don't regret my child or how I got in the position,
I just wish my mother would pay me more attention Instead of
dismissing me
When I began to mention the good things of my pregnancy.
I'm happy for myself, and can't wait until I'm a mother to give my
child the life I never had,
So being a mother now doesn't make me mad
But it's a joyous feeling and it makes me feel glad.
I hope my child doesn't end up to much like me
Instead I want her to live life happy.
In everyone's life, there's trials and tribulations
But for them to go through the same obstacles I went through is
wrong
Because see, the mistake with me
Was that I thought I was grown at an early age,
So I had to live life to learn,
So I'm here to install the morals
and values that I didn't receive,
This way they don't live life with the same pains as me.
Hopefully this will open her eyes so that she can see
That there is a life better.
Stay on the right path and don't let the devil be clever And that
mama here with you through all good
and bad weather.
I'm here to let my child know that the sky is the limit.
So, unlike what my mother told me,
That the stars are bright
and whatever you put your mind to,
You can do.
And just like the sunlight shines and makes the sky bright
You can do the same if you follow that right path and you will
glow just like the sun in the nightlight.

LIL' SPANKS

The following is a short piece from Lil' Spanks. We first met Lil' Spanks in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall; from there, he took us along with him to Trinity-Anza, Santa Clara County Jail, and now to Sacramento County Jail where he's facing new charges. He wrote this piece for you and for himself, as a reminder of how to deal with times when "you're feeling as lost as I." We hope that Lil' Spanks is on the road to finding himself, and we look forward to hearing from him again soon.

Let Go And Let God

(This is a little encouragement and hope if or when you're feeling as lost as I. Feel it!)

When you're searching for truth and you can't find your way
When people don't hear what you're trying to say
The answers won't come to the things that you pray
It's time to let go and let God.

Let go of the bad and the good will appear
Trust in the knowledge that he's always near
The answers and choices are always more clear
When you let go and let God.

Just lift up your hands and surrender your heart
Tell him your worries and he'll do his part
Let go of the past and your future will start
When you finally let go and let God.

Keep your chin to the sky
And wipe those lonely tears from your eyes.
One love!

**Let go of the
bad and the
good will appear**

DONALD E. WINSTON

Donald E. Winston writes us this moving and in some ways frightening piece about childrearing.

This is tough commentary to read because few parents these days can spend 24 hours a day with their children, but most of us understand the point Donald is making, because we've met many youngsters who have obviously spent way too much time on the streets without positive parental supervision. We appreciate Donald's desire to reach out and teach from the confines of Pelican Bay State Prison.

How Do We Deal With The Generation Of Our Sons?

Today's sons are growing up far faster than their parents and their parents-parents ever did. Today's sons are far more independent, strong-willed, rebelling, intelligent, curious, and much more mature than what many parents realize. The reason is because most of our today's sons are forced to be that way due to environmental stimuli induced by upbringing and social influence, such influence and upbringing creates a forced condition that speeds up the process of their mental growth, causing them to grow up before their time.

That leaves little room for the parent to instruct their child's mind towards their own wills, dreams, and endeavors that they desire for their child. You cannot work eight hours a day, leaving your child home alone to grow up by his/herself and expect that child to be the same when you get back. Leaving a child home alone for eight hours a day without constant "parental supervision" is like putting an untrained dog that's unleashed in the backyard with the gate open and telling it to stay in the yard as you're walking in your house.

What is the possibility that that dog will obey orders and stay in that backyard? Slim to none.

It's the same as a child who is left in the home eight hours a day unsupervised. That child's curiosity causes them to explore, and before you know it, your child is out there in the streets doing things that are far beyond their years. As they get older, they adapt to their eight hours of freedom, their rebellious independence, and find themselves forming an identity that is completely foreign to the parent(s), and their child is no longer their child, but a complete stranger living in their house like rodents who occupy a house uninvited.

This is when the parent(s), must make a decision and either accept or reject the stranger who was once their naïve/innocent child. Accepting this new stranger usually leads to an assortment of difficulties that strains the relationship between the child and parents because the new identity may not be appealing to the parent, which will cause many clashes between parent and child . . . To reject this new stranger will only make the relationship between the parent and child even worse, which may very well drive the child away from the home and create the most profound tension imaginable.

So what can you do? When the stranger state occurs, the parent must then take control yet have an open mind for compromise so that the child doesn't feel completely restrained or imprisoned within his/her own home. When a child is of age to make his own decisions (18 or older), the parent should accept that because whether his/her decision agrees with the parent or not, the child is no longer a child, but an adult, and must wield his/her own destiny, for in truth, it's that child's (adults) life and not the parents' responsibility to make the decisions about their child's life anymore.

If you cannot give your child constant supervision in the home 24 hours a day, then, you must expect what's to come from such neglect. The world today is a much faster moving and grueling place. It is the age of technology and the boom of today's sons who are selfish, rowdy, smart, uninhibited, and full of energy. If constant supervision is not directed towards today's sons in their tender years, which are the best times to shape and mold their infant minds, then one should not be surprised at the stranger that appears in the image of the child in his/her later years. Think about that the next time you look at your child.



WILL THE REAL ONE

The following food for thought is written by Will, who calls himself The Real One. Will's graced the

pages of The Beat Without before, and in the following piece he echoes his earlier call for Black men to empower themselves beyond the player-pusher-pimp trap that so many have fallen into. Will writes to us from CSATF in Corcoran, and we look forward to hearing from him again soon.

The Black man of today, his only legacy to his son is how to be a player, or pusher, or pimp — it's pathetic

Soul Food For Thought

It amazes me when I think about the things that we take for granted; we being Black men in this case. For one, our social freedom. For those who are unaware, allow me to explain why I use the term social freedom.

With Black people, freedom comes in stages. We're either free to do this, or free to do that, but never totally free. A conscious Black person knows that in the world such as it is today, for a Black person total freedom comes only in death and no other way. I myself have struggled in the past trying to maintain a balance between being Black and being what I thought would be socially accepted, until finally I realized that being Black will never be socially accepted, only tolerated to a certain extent, which is why in every aspect of our being, we must stay a step ahead of our adversaries who now come in blackface as well as you know what. Mind, body, and soul we must be strong! We must stay strong!

We must feed our young knowledge, knowledge of themselves, and embrace them with true love and dedication. Only then can we at least make this hell on earth bearable for them. I wrote once before on how the Black man of today, his only legacy to his son is how to be a player, or pusher, or pimp — it's pathetic. We're not even conscious of our surroundings. We've been infiltrated from every angle. We no longer strive to improve ourselves; too busy trying to prove ourselves. Our intellect is faulty, and we remain loyal only to destroying each other.

It's time we took off the blinders, my brothers, and it has to start with each of us as individuals. Peace!

TRAVOY

Travoy aka Chunky excelled in our Beat Within workshops in Marin County Juvenile Hall, and now resides in ROP (Rites of Passage, a boot camp facility in San Andreas, California.) He is a voracious reader and prolific writer. Today he offers you another drama from the life of Chunky, his family, his homies and homegirls. He hopes you'll learn from his dramas and enjoy reading them.

See What Happens To You If You Don't Listen?

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Chunky, the writer and hero
Michelle: Chunky's mom
Unique: A girl Chunky meets at a party
Tyree: Chunky's homeboy
Kernisha: Chunky's friend
Monica: Chunky's friend
Capri: Chunky's friend, Marcus' girlfriend
Marcus: Chunky's friend, Capri's boyfriend

Chunky: (It was 10:30 at night.) I'm ready to go to the party thrown by this girl (named Unique). Mom came home.
Mom (Michelle): You can't go, you're on probation, and I don't want you to get in any more trouble!
Chunky: I'm not, mom, I just want to chill.
Mom: No!

Knock, knock knock
Mom: Who is it?
Tyree: Me.

So I (Chunky) leave. Anyway, Unique's house was right down the street, but I didn't have the instructions, but I found it.
Kerneshia: What's up, Chunky?
Chunky: I'm cool.
Kerneshia: Come, sit down

So she sat on my lap. They got smoked and drank their drank. We dancin' and everything.
Monica: How you doin'?
Chunky: I'm cool. Mom's just trippin'.
Monica: I feel you.

I was going out with a girl named Alaynna at the time, and she wasn't there. They had a room or the singles and a room for the couples.
Capri: Turn out the lights.
Marcus: Capri, let's go to the bathroom.
Capri: All right.
Marcus: One of y'all got some condoms?
Chunky: I got you. Unique, come here.
Unique: Chunky, what do you want?
Chunky: Why are you actin' like that?
Unique: 'Cause I already have a man.

I go to the kitchen and get me a vodka and Capri and Marcus are in the bathroom doing they thizzle.
Kerneshia: I'm feeling your cousin, Tyree, but he's too shy!
Chunky: Yeah, I know!

So I leave all the couples alone and I go to the living room to watch Baby Boy. The whole house is stankin', you know why? So I call moms, see if she will let me come back, but she said, "no." I said "OK."

It's morning time.
Unique: Smack, smack. Chunky, wake up!
Chunky: I'm up!
Tyree: We goin' to get somethin' to eat.

Chunky: Kernesian needs to change her clothes, so we had to wait for her.
Tyree: We went to the doughnut shop, got a lot of doughnuts, and we got some money. We get back to the house.
Kerneshia: Let's order some pizza.
Unique: What kind?
Marcus: Cheese.
Tyree: Cheese.
Chunky: Cheese.

We finish the pizza and started watching BET. Kerneshia had to leave early. Everybody left but me, Marcus, Capri, Unique, Tyree.
Tyree: Let's go to your house and chill.

We leave and go to my house. My momma done changed the locks on the door, so I'm locked out. Then Tyree leaves. He misses his bus, so we decide we are gonna go to the movies, because on Fridays in Marin, the movies be crackin'. All the females be over there. We got on the "50." We get there. It's hella females—fine, pretty, ugly, thick, skinny, small, tall, five, dimes, all kind of eye candies. We was tryna find someplace to stay, but we couldn't. We gets back on the bus. I wanna go to my girls house, so I get off.
Tyree: Let's hit a lick.
Chunky: No, I'm cool.

So Tyree sees this man walking, pulls out the piece and robs him and we start runnin'. Police is everywhere. They catch us and take us to the station. I sat there for three hours. I got picked up by my uncle.

Chunky: See, what happens to you when you don't listen? If I would have listened to my mom, I wouldn't be where I am at now, in ROP (Rites of Passage.) But that's the past. No ifs ands or buts about it. Well, I wish I could be home right now. I miss my mom so much... But when I was feelin' down, it was you guys who lifted me up. It seems since I moved to Marin, I've been in trouble. But I also met good people like Black Jack, Lil' E, KG, Slick Rick, Ish, Alex, Shannon, CG, Tiptoe, Just namin' a few.

But probation has messed up my life. Don't let it mess up yours. I hope you liked my story.



**I wish I could be home right now.
I miss my mom so much.**

ARTHUR LEE HENDERSON

The talented and insightful Mr. Arthur Lee Henderson, Sr. aka Bakri Bilal Abdal We'min has sent us his latest poems and an essay/poem from Lancaster State Prison. His poems speak for themselves, but we may add they are very deep and thoughtful as he shares his views on the way of the world, to his own world, living in prison.

Fool's Gold

A human unaware of the important things
in life
Is a human vigorously pursuing the vanities
in life

The Horse Vs. The Donkey

When the financially enslaved summon a meeting with the physically enslaved, a group of deprived human beings congregate in a small room to engage in the age-old debate, hoping to settle once and for all, the all-important theoretical question human beings must resolve in order to promote self-levitation.

The human similarities must be relegated to animal forms, i.e., the horse versus the donkey. This allows everyone to agree that reproduction, though possible, between two parties, does not in and of itself suggest any form of equality, because in the end, one party is, by nature, more stubborn and less intelligent, thus identifying the ass in the group.

Unfortunately, no institutional correctives measures are under discussion, so prison life continues to remain an inhumane environment where the struggle continues and those allowed to breed and reproduce are neither the strongest nor the brightest!

The Worst Things Aren't Free

The enslaved are forced to pay for their conquerors' lifestyle
Those oppressed are forced to pay for the decisions of their soulless governments
Those wanting to deceive must pay the mediums they use to deceive
Those being deceived will pay for their lack of knowledge, the only liberator

Modern America

When a people are denied sufficient knowledge
When a people are given lies to replace facts
When a people are given flowery words of deception
When a people are given syrup to induce compliance
When a people are led to envision a utopian tomorrow
When a people become willing to fork over all of their rights
When a people's lives become an andriodable hell
When a people have forgotten

Too Young To Vote

A society that does not protect the rights
Of those too young to vote
Is a society
Not yet civilized

Lies Of Oppression
Lies of opportunity lead
To irrational fear of the other
Human beings to forge endorsement
For and by
Their oppressors

Segregation
Every opinion derived from religious bias
Every opinion derived from racial bias
Is an opinion leading alienation intended to institute
The reenactment of segregation

Our Children, Our Future

When our children's lives are cut short
A part of our future has been destroyed
And neither our children nor our future
Can be replaced
Thus the killing of children isn't murder
It's genocide

**prison life continues to remain an inhumane environment
where the struggle continues**

RENE ARAGON

Rene Aragon, daughter of the late Ms. Liz Aragon, counselor of SF/YGC drops us a piece this week that we want you all to think about a little. She is one of our old interns at The Beat Within office but is now working part time at a grocery store and going to school full time. We encourage all you folks out there to listen up to this piece and see what answers you can come up with.

A Good Topic

Someone told me to write a BWO, but I had a hard time thinking of what to write that was worth writing. The first topic that I was given was "What won't you ever forgive someone for doing or saying?" But then I thought about it, and I felt like that would have changed many thoughts in people's minds about my family.

The other topic was when have I ever felt disrespected? Good topic? I thought so, given the fact that I feel disrespected everyday or every other day.

Being a female and not being an ugly female it's hard to walk down the block without getting looks, smart ass comments, or hollering. Now that's disrespectful. The looks I don't mind that much, because I'm not hearing what you have to say. It's the comments that bother me the most, because some of the things guys say are ignorant and when you don't get a reaction from your

comment a female is called all kinds of names, you end up getting mad at her because YOU GOT NO GAME.

It's sad because a female can't go out looking good without having some jerk get too close and say something in her ear and I remember the last time someone said something in my ear I smacked him. It's not just walking down the block, but sometimes it's at work.

Yea... I remember this one time this guy I was working with got mad and called me a bitch because I kept shooting down all his efforts in taking me out. Once again, why was I a bitch? And I ask any of you readers why, please tell me why is a female a bitch 'cause she doesn't want to talk to you? It ain't my fault that you're disrespectful and you can't act like a man. So now I ask you, the readers, when have you ever felt disrespected and why must a female be called names when a guy don't get his way or better yet 'cause he ain't GOT NO GAME?



CECIL L. WEST

With great pleasure we have Cecil L. West back in the pages of *The Beat Within*. This week Cecil delivers five poems, minus the his short story that was not included in his latest effort. The poems are touching from the love poems to the powerful piece about incarceration and the rap industry. Cecil is an elder who is looking out and we're grateful for that. Cecil L. West writes us from the Jefferson Correctional Institution, which is a part of the Florida Correctional Institution in Monticello, Florida.

While Incarcerated

While incarcerated think of ways to help others . . . Keep in mind we are all sisters and brothers. May it be black or white . . . We are all equal in God's eye sight. A lot of people don't feel this way . . . But they will stand before God on Judgement Day!!

While incarcerated search your heart and soul . . . What you find is far more precious than Gold! Stop being blinded by worldly things and find your true worth . . . We all have a special gift within, that was given to us from the day of our birth!

While incarcerated educate yourself as much as you can . . . You will find that education makes you a better woman or man! Education is a tool for us to use . . . Without it makes you an easy target to be abused!

While incarcerated I've searched my heart and mind . . . After 39 years I've realized I have a great talent that I've possessed from the beginning of time!

Friends

Friends are very hard to find . . . I've never met no one I could call mine. Most are friends when you have something to give . . . And it will continue to be this way 'cause of the way people live!

Friends are people who care, share, and understand each other . . . And accept each other as sister and brother. some friendships grow to be love . . . which is as beautiful as the stars shining bright up above.

Friends will never hurt each other . . . and don't discriminate because of skin color! This world can be very cruel at times dealing with people . . . As I continue to write, you will see that it goes even deeper!

I've met my new friend whose name is Kat . . . I hope she keeps it real with me and don't turn out to be a fake! Now as I lay here and write this poem for my new friend . . . I hope our friendship lasts to the bitter end!!

Keep it real my friend!

**Friends will never
hurt each other**

To The Beat Within

Hello, am back again! Am enclosing five poems that I'd like to share with the world.

I also have a short story that I've written which is a true story, and part of one of the novels that I have written. It contains a couple of sex scenes of which is part of the story. I hope it doesn't keep you from publishing. I also have a poem that I've written to go with the story.

I'll be sending you all more of my work very soon. Thank for you all's encouragement concerning my writing.

Sincerely,

Lastly, I will try and send most of my work typed up.

The Rap Industry

The rap industry has brought the black culture a long ways . . . promoting violence and unprotected sex each and everyday! Leading our kids to thinking it's cool . . . not realizing that they're the fools!

The rap industry is leading our kids to believe there's nothing wrong with unprotected sex and guns . . . Our kids will end up in detention centers and prisons, if something is not done!

The rap industry is growing world wide... We need the rappers on our kid's side. To rap lyrics that are positive for our boys and girls... That would lead them to a better world!

The rap industry have a lot of talented people . . . And as you read this poem you will see that it goes even deeper! Our kids idolize some of the rappers more than our own mom and dads . . . In a way that is very sad.

The rap industry needs to send out a more positive message to our kids . . . Than they could be proud of something that they did! Encouraging our kids to get an education . . . So they won't end up in prison or probation!

The rap industry has the power to lead women and me in a positive direction . . . But they're blinded by money, greed, which hinders their affection. what's of the starving kids in families controlled by addiction . . . These words am printing is not fiction!

The rap industry is getting richer and richer . . . As you look at it, something is definitely wrong with this picture! While kids are hungry, homeless and have no where to go . . . And in their hearts they're dying very slow! These suffering kids are some rapper's fan . . . So you rappers need to wake up and give our kids a helping hand!

CECIL L. WEST (CONT.)

I Miss You

I miss you my beautiful wife
with all my heart . . . It's been
this way from the very start.
All the days and nights am away from
you . . . show me the love in my heart
is so very true.

I miss you and all the beautiful times
that we've shared . . . I know within
my heart that you truly cared. All
the times I've made you cry . . . I
realize all the reasons why! The
pain in my heart runs deep and true . . .
it's a fact that I'll always love you.

I miss you and all the times we've
made love . . . which made both of us
glow like the moon shining bright
up above. When seeing you in my
dreams . . . I realize what true love
means.

As I lay here thinking of all the times
we've walked along the ocean shore
feeding the seagulls . . . these memories
are more precious than diamonds or
pearls. I miss you my bountiful wife . . .
and without you I will always have sorrow
in my life! And I know I will always
feel this way . . . And you'll always be in
my heart till my dying day!

I miss you

Thinking of you is all I seem to do

Thinking of You

Thinking of you day and night . . .
The loneliness in my heart is a
constant fight. As I lay here in
my bunk with thought's of you running
through my mind . . . The love in my
heart was pre-destined from the
beginning of time.

Thinking of you is all I seem to do . . .
and some of my thoughts makes me
feel so sad and blue. All the times I've
brought tears to your beautiful eyes
hurt me so very deep . . . It's a struggle
now for me to even sleep.

Thinking of you and all the times you
stood beside me even when I was
wrong . . . now that you've gone, I feel
so very alone! Nothing can ever change
the way I feel about you . . . these words
I print are so very true.

As I lay here on this Saturday evening . . .
I think of how the pain ripped through my
heart when you told me you was leaving!
As I walked away with tears streaming down
my face, I realized at that time the world
could be a very cruel place!

VILASAK THEBPANYA

Vilasak Thebpanya is an intern at our office at The Beat Within. He wrote this a while ago and we took our sweet time to drop it in our pages of The Beat Within. (Actually we forgot but Vilasak doesn't need to know that). Anyway, he drops this amazing speech for us that he wrote for The Henry O'loff Outpatient Program in which he's participating. We hope that you all can soak up some game from it. If he can do it — all you readers can too! We first met Vilasak in our weekly Beat workshops in SF/YGC. Today he is not only an intern here he is weeks away from starting his first semester at San Francisco State University.

My Success

Welcome ladies and gentlemen for listening. My name is Vilasak Thebpanya and I am 18. I am truly honored that I was offered to speak on my behalf. I have never appeared in front of such a large crowd so I would like to thank you all for your support and undivided attention.

This speech is to express my situation and express my experiences and interaction with The Henry O'loff Outpatient Program. How I initially began and how I have changed dramatically in a period of several months.

I was associated among negative people, they are my friends and they appreciated my friendship as well, however, it put me around negative influences such as alcohol, drugs, and violence. I used to smoke marijuana, drink alcohol, and engage in physical conflicts. I never realized how much my lifestyle was affecting me, socially and educationally, my absents became very sporadic and my grades began to slip. One day, it finally caught up with me, I was arrested two times on drug related charges. I was put on probation and forced to attend The Henry O'loff Outpatient Program.

I live in the Visitation District and it is well across town to The Henry O'loff meetings. During my first

meeting I was reluctant to continue attending the program. My first thoughts were "It's boring, I'm bored, it's hella far, I wanna go home." Then, as time progress I became more involved and interested in the issues we talked about, personal problems, how drugs and alcohol affects your body, short real-life simulations, family disputes. The conversation was diverse. I like the people there; they are very friendly people, counselors and clients as well.

Working with Eric, one of my counselors, I was able to set goals for myself. One big goal is going to college, and now it seems more realistic, actual, and reachable. In addition to school, another goal is staying sober, I have been sober for almost six months and I am astonished at my accomplishment. I learned tremendously about myself.

I am doing very well for myself at this moment. I am currently attending Thurgood Marshall High School and completed my first semester with a 3.5 grade point average. I am working at The Beat Within, which also has been a big factor in my rehabilitation. I plan to attend college in the Fall. I will continue to stay sober, and I am extremely optimistic for what lies ahead...



**I have been sober for almost six months and I am astonished
at my accomplishment.**

**If I want to be free I must first
confide in myself,
I must trust my mind...
because no one else holds the key.**

check out the rest of Ben's POW page 4